

Pocket Book

STORYTELLER WEEKLY

New Series, 341, Registered in Australia for transmission by post as a newspaper.

SEPTEMBER 3, 1949



Estella and Dolores

A "DARK NIGHTS" ADVENTURE
BY THOMAS BURKE

Crimes In The Chinese Room BY JOHN S. MUNRO

6^d

Don't Split on Me!

BY JOHN LAFFIN



I HAVE a split personality.

It seems I've been living with it for years without knowing it, and it took a printologist—a fellow who reads palm prints—to tell me about it.

The funny thing is he doesn't know he told me, because I had my print read under two different names.

On only five or six points in forty or so do I and my other self agree.

For instance, the real me has common sense, concentration, confidence, good imagination, good directive ability and good sportsmanship. My dual personality is lacking in confidence, and none of the other points are mentioned.

But the most marked change I underwent in the two days between readings was in my personality.

I had the works—ego, super-ego, will-power, self-discipline; but all my dual self had was super-ego.

The printologist notes that my temperament is "cycloid," which, according to the Oxford dictionary means: "A curve traced by a point on a radius of a circle within or without its circumference, as the circle rolls along a straight line."

My other self is schizoid, which the Oxford doesn't list at all, but which Webster says has to do with schizophrenia.

I have high intelligence, but my other self didn't rate any grade at all.

Things the two of us have in common are a practical and possessive material mind, hypersensitivity, introversion. We both have literary tendencies, and we both "love physically and mentally."

Who doesn't?

There is lots more like that, all evidencing the terrible conflict going on in my soul. The whole thing opens up exciting and frightening possibilities.

What will happen, for instance, if my personalities—cycloid and schizoid—get tangled and I find my schizoid being traced by a point on a radius of a circle as the circle rolls along a straight line.

It has its good points, too. If I'm accused of lack of sportsmanship, I can always produce the palm print and say: "Well, there it is in black and white; I'm a good sportsman."

And I'm gladder than I can say that the two of us love physically and mentally. Between us we must be quite a lover.

I once knew an army corporal who got a discharge on the grounds of split personality.

I remember the night his affliction first became evident, when he tore out of his tent, arms outstretched and shrieking: "Come back! Come back, you—!"

He was caught after a half-mile chase, trying to climb a big gum tree. At first we thought he had the DT's, but he was stone cold sober.

When we asked him what was the matter, he stared at us, pointed up the tree and yelled: "There! Can't you see him?"

We peered into the darkened branches and saw no one. We looked at the corporal blankly.

"My dual personality!" he shouted. "Come down, you swine!"

It went on like that for days. He wrestled with his dual personality,

chased it along dongas, threw a grenade at it, bashed it with a tin hat and even bayoneted it. And still it wouldn't go away.

Finally he was taken to the Regimental Medical Officer. Standing in attention opposite the MO, the corporal suddenly leaned forward and clipped him with a sharp right on the jaw.

"My God!" exclaimed the MO. "What the hell do you think you're doing? Dammit, I'll have you placed under arrest."

"Do what, sir?" the corporal asked blankly.

"You punched me!" the officer said indignantly.

The corporal covered his face with his hands. "Oh, God!" he whispered brokenly. "Now he's trying to have me court-martialled."

He snapped into action suddenly, flailing the air with his fists and dancing about excitedly. "It wasn't me, sir," he shouted. "It was my dual personality. I'll fix him, though!"

He wrecked the Regimental Aid Post before he was subdued by two sergeants.

After that he and his dual personality became friendly, and he would go about the camp introducing him. He talked to him constantly, insisted on a place being kept for him at the mess table.

Being a campaign-hardened veteran, the MO suspected a stunt to get a discharge, and one day, while passing the corporal, cut him across the buttocks with his cane.

When the corporal jumped around the MO grinned and said: "Not me, corporal; my dual personality. All right, it was fun while it lasted. But it didn't work, so let's drop it, eh?"

The corporal gave him a pitying look, said passionately: "You poor devil . . . you, too!"

Then he yelled: "Keep your bloke away, sir! Don't let him come near mine! He'll kill yours!"

He got his discharge a fortnight later.

Three years later he got 12 months' hard for tickling the peter of a big store, in which he was a salesman.

He told the judge he was taking the money to pay his dual personality, who the firm refused to pay officially.

The judge was a much more sceptical man than the MO; he wasn't even amused.

And when the ex-corporal shouted abuse at him, he called him back and doubled the sentence.

A year for his dual personality, too. It just goes to show what I'm facing with a split personality.

I had thought of going back for a third reading as verification, but decided against it.

God only knows what would happen if I finished up with a treble personality!

THE END ★ ★

Pocket Book

WEEKLY STORYTELLER

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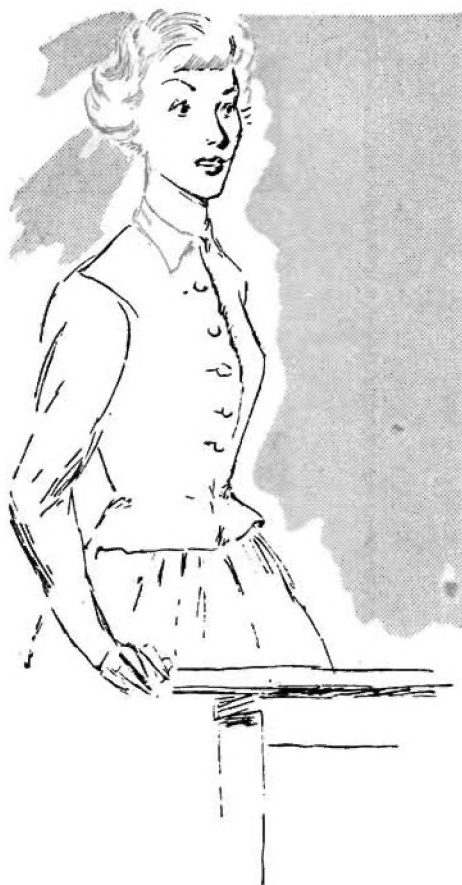
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The Faithful Male

BY STEVE McNEIL

Should a difficult wife be spanked? Peter didn't think so—at first, but later he wondered whether direct action wouldn't have been better.



PETER sipped his after-dinner coffee, performing the somewhat miraculous feat of getting a mouthful of coffee, reading what a leading professional golfer had written about the position of the hands at the top of the backswing, and at the same time keeping one eye on Anne, who was being strangely silent. He wondered why.

She lighted a cigarette and shook out the match. She blew smoke at the ceiling.

"Your Miss Campbell is very attractive, don't you think?"

Peter abandoned his newspaper and his coffee. He turned both eyes on his wife. So that was it. He opened his mouth to challenge her "your Miss Campbell," but four years of married life had taught him a great deal.

He shrugged his shoulders. He picked up his coffee cup again and looked at the paper. "I suppose she's all right," he said, negligently, "if you care for her type."

"What do you mean—her type?"

"Oh—black hair, brown eyes, the freshly-scrubbed, neat-as-a-pin executive type. Starched white blouses, stocking seams always straight—that sort of thing."

Anne peered at him. "Not that you ever notice her," she said. She got up from the table. "I'll let the washing-up wait." She went into the front room and picked up her book. "I suppose you're going to work again tonight?"

Peter nodded. "We're getting ready for a sale."

"Doesn't Miss Campbell mind working at night?"

Peter looked up from his paper. "H-m-m-m? Oh, Miss Campbell? No, she doesn't mind."

Anne settled down with her book. Peter opened his paper and turned to the sports page. He had read half a column when he felt her eyes on him. He squirmed a bit in his chair and tried to concentrate. He looked up. Anne was staring at him, her head tipped to one side.

"All right," he said, "what is it?"

"I was just wondering."

Peter sighed. "Wondering what?"

"Wondering whether you're unfaithful."

Peter dropped his paper. "What?"

"Unfaithful. Don't you know what it means?"

"I know what it means," Peter said, "but I don't know what you mean. For one thing, I love you, even if you are a bit barmy; for another thing I don't have the inclination; and for another, I'm too busy making a living."

"But husbands are," Anne said. "Don't you ever read a book?"

"Yes, but that doesn't mean that I am." He bent forward. "If this is just because of Miss Campbell, and because she's working late—"

"Oh, pooh!" Anne said. "Miss Campbell!"

"Well, she's just an efficient, capable employee, like a hundred thousand other girls, and if it isn't Miss Campbell, then what gave you the idea?"

"Oh—things," Anne said.

"What things?"

"Oh, the casual air that you have when certain people are mentioned. And the glib way you always explain things. Like that telegram which said: 'Love, Joyce.' The one that said they'd meet you in Plumstead."

"Women and elephants!" Peter yelled. "That was three years ago, and I told you that Joyce was a chap called William Joyce. He was an army dentist, and putting 'Love Joyce' in the telegram was his idea of a joke. Didn't I even bring him all the way back from Plumstead to prove it to you?"

"You brought an Army dentist back all right, who said his name was Joyce."

Peter closed his eyes and settled back in his chair, his expression one of extreme fatigue coupled with resignation. Presently he opened his eyes and said wearily: "All right. Joyce is really a beautiful blonde hoyden. I was keeping her in a flat in London. I couldn't marry her because she was keeping a half-wit husband in an asylum. Now are you satisfied?"

"No," Anne said. "You're making that all up."

"And I finally tired of her and dropped her down a lift shaft." Peter stood up and walked round the room. He waved his arms. "Sometimes I think you sit at home all day long and dream up these wild ideas just to worry me and keep me from reading the paper. Why is it that every woman is jealous of a newspaper?"

"You don't have to get excited."

"Excited!" Peter yelled. "Who's excited?"

"Thou dost protest too much," Anne said.

He ran his hands through his hair. He tried to look like an injured male. He only succeeded in looking harassed. He walked over and stood in front of Anne. He put his hands on his hips and glared. He wished that he could be grim but it was hard going. Anne was not just another blonde. Anne was a blonde with big, grey eyes and wonderful eyelashes. In an evening dress she looked beautiful. In a swim suit she was terrific. Peter was more or less used to all that by now, after four years, but he would never get used to the slightly mad ideas which she dreamed up on occasion, or were dreamed up for her by some character in a book. Sometimes Peter thought it would be better if Anne hadn't learnt to read.

"I don't know where you got this latest notion," he said, "but I do know this—if I catch up with the fellow who wrote the book, I'll beat his brains out."

"You can't."

"I knew it. He hasn't any brains."

"He died two years ago, and he did have brains. He was a very famous psychiatrist and he'd made all kinds of long studies of husbands and things."

"And things? What things?"

"Men."

"Aren't husbands men?"

"That's just what he said," Anne announced triumphantly. "Just because a man is a husband it doesn't mean that he won't be unfaithful. That's what I was trying to tell you in the first place."

Peter swayed back and forth with

● NOTE.—All characters and incidents in this story are imaginary and if any name used be that of a living person, such use is due to inadvertence and is not intended to refer to such person.



his eyes closed, like a beaten fighter who won't go down.

"Anne," he said, slowly and evenly. "I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll forget the whole thing. We'll pretend we never had this discussion."

"That's just like a man. When I try to explain something logically and sensibly, you want to ignore it."

"Logically!" Peter yelled. "Are you being funny?"

"Well, it's true, isn't it, that husbands are unfaithful?"

"Yes."

"Well, you're a husband, aren't you?"

"Indubitably."

"Well, if you're a husband and husbands are unfaithful, then logically—"

Peter threw up his hands. "I've had enough. How you can twist things round so—"

"Well, no wonder husbands are unfaithful. I never see you these days. You get up in the morning and, when I try to talk to you, you growl and disappear into the bathroom, and when you come out you hide behind the paper. Monday you go out with Jack; Wednesday you play squash; Thursday you go to the Masonic meetings and Friday you work until ten o'clock. Saturday night we go out somewhere and that leaves Sunday, because Tuesday you work late, too."

"All right," Peter said, "does that leave me any time to be unfaithful?"

"Well, it doesn't leave you any time to devote to your wife."

"It must be the books," Peter said.

"Psychiatrists and what-nots—how to live—how not to live . . . A man can't choose a tie these days with-

out wondering whether the color of it is going to affect his future. They've even got it worked out that if a man buys a blue car he's a highbrow, and an egotist if he buys a yellow one. One day I'm going to write a book on how to live without books."

"Well, you can talk as much as you like, but you'll still be working tonight and I'll still be alone."

"We have to put in a new window display and do the lettering of the price cards—and change some of the table displays for the sale."

"You and Miss Campbell?"

"Me, Miss Campbell and Jack," Peter said, "so there'll be no opportunity for any of the juicy situations you have been dreaming up by reading subversive literature. Why don't you start reading detective stories?"

"I think I'll wash my hair tonight and do my nails and go to bed and read."

"Good idea," Peter said. "I'll go out and get you some comics."

On the way to the shop he wondered whether a good spanking would do the trick. That it was a fleeting notion of Anne's, he had no doubt, but he also had no way of knowing how serious she was. He fondly hoped that she would soon run through the books on sex and unfaithfulness (which she borrowed from her women's club library) and turn to something else, such as learning to play golf or how to garden.

Living, he decided, was becoming complicated. In the old days people were unconcerned about neuroses, glands, vitamins, mental states, sex life and marital relations. In the old days, if a man was unfaithful

he was a cad. Now he was a statistic—the centre of discussion at the feminine discussion group. He wondered whether the emancipation of women had been a good thing, and again toyed with the idea of putting Anne across his knee.

The lights were on when he reached the shop. He walked in and then stared. Miss Campbell was wearing an off-the-shoulder cotton dress. Miss Campbell had beautiful shoulders. She looked like anything but an efficient, capable employee like a hundred thousand other girls. She looked like a fugitive from a fashion magazine. Peter was instantly thankful that Anne wasn't with him, and also that Jack would be there. Of course, there was nothing wrong, except that, at the moment, Miss Campbell looked more like a *femme fatale* than a working girl.

Peter looked here and there. Then he asked: "Where's Jack?"

Miss Campbell shrugged her beautiful shoulders. "He's on his way, I suppose. Do you want me to do the lettering on the cards or help you with the window?"

Peter decided that it would probably be better all round if Miss Campbell weren't in the window.

"You'd better do the cards," he said, "and Jack can give me a hand in the window."

Miss Campbell assembled brushes, paints and cards and Peter started taking things out of the window. Half an hour later he had the window stripped and Jack still hadn't arrived. He picked up the telephone, rang Jack's flat and listened to the ringing of the telephone. He hung up and said: "The fool probably ran into some friends and went off somewhere." He looked at Miss Camp-

bell. "How are you getting on?"

"All right."

Peter bent over her shoulder to look at the cards. It was a good thing for all concerned, he thought, that he was a faithful husband. Miss Campbell's work was as excellent as her shoulders. He nodded. "Fine. A professional artist couldn't do them any better."

She turned her head and smiled at him. Her mouth was only inches from his.

"It's fun," she said.

Peter patted her shoulder. "Good girl," he said.

He didn't hear the door open. Then he heard Anne's voice.

"Hallo!" she said.

Peter jumped. Miss Campbell did not help matters. Her face went pink.

"I was just looking at Miss Campbell's lettering," Peter said.

"Oh," Anne said. "That's a lovely dress, Miss Campbell."

Miss Campbell looked down at the dress as if she had just noticed that she was wearing it.

"It's just a little cotton. I am going somewhere later and didn't want to do home and change."

"I was lonely," Anne said. "I thought I'd drop in and see if I could help, but I suppose—"

"Wonderful!" Peter said heartily. "Good idea! Jack didn't turn up and we're shorthanded."

"Perhaps you forgot to tell him," suggested Anne.

"I did not forget," Peter said evenly.

"Well, carry on, Miss Campbell. Mrs. Hanford and I will finish the window." He hoped he sounded brisk and business-like.

By ten o'clock they had finished and Peter said: "Well, I think that's all. Can we drop you anywhere, Miss Campbell?"

SHE shook her head. "I'm not going far. I'll enjoy the walk." She bit her lip and then said: "I wonder what became of Mr. Standing?"

"I wonder," said Peter. Anne didn't say anything.

In the car she sat in silence and looked straight ahead. Presently she said: "It's just a little cotton."

Peter glanced at her. "What?"

"Ten pounds if it cost a penny."

"Now what are you talking about?"

"Freshly-scrubbed, neat-as-a-pin executive type — ha! Your Miss Campbell is no more the executive type than I am."

"Stop calling her 'my Miss Campbell,'" Peter said. "She's just working for me."

"No wonder men are unfaithful, with those off-the-shoulder affairs some women wear these days."

"Listen," said Peter. "That's the first time she's ever appeared in one of those. Are you accusing me of having an affair with Miss Campbell?"

"Accusing you? I should think not."

"Then what makes you behave like this?"

"Behave like what? I'm not behaving in any way."

Peter groaned. He drove home silently, let Anne out, put the car in the garage and came into the house.

Anne was already in the bedroom, climbing out of her dress.

"And the reason we were alone is because Jack Standing didn't turn up," Peter said through his teeth.

He went into the bathroom, cleaned his teeth, put on his pyjamas and came back into the bedroom. Anne was in bed, her head half covered, her back turned uncompromisingly to him. Peter climbed into bed and said: "Good night!"

Anne said: "Good night," into her pillow.

Peter lay awake and stared at the ceiling. He wondered whether this thing were becoming serious. Nor—



"I can't stand the ticking of the alarm clock, so I got a rooster."

mally, Anne nagged him for a while about their differences, but never yet had she taken a quarrel to bed with her. Usually she cast it aside like an old pair of stockings, and said: "Let's make it up and have a tea party," which could consist of anything from toast and cocoa to sausages and beer. But not tonight, apparently.

Peter had read somewhere that the only reason women quarrelled with their husbands was because they had not received enough attention. He resolved to talk to Anne in the morning instead of reading the paper. On that happy thought he went to sleep.

But Anne didn't get up in the morning. Normally, Peter stumbled out of bed, made tea and woke her up with a cup. This morning he poured out the tea, opened the bedroom door and said, cheerily: "Tea!"

Anne wriggled under the blankets. "Tea," Peter repeated.

"I don't want any," she mumbled into her pillow.

Peter said: "Oh!" He went back into the kitchen, his brow furrowed. This seemed to him to be a major development. Never before had she refused her early-morning tea. She always maintained that it reacted on her like a cold bath, enabling her to get both eyes open at once.

He drank two cups thoughtfully, determined to have the rest of his breakfast by himself, get dressed and leave the house as soon as possible.

When he got to the shop he said to

Jack: "What happened to you last night?"

JACK glanced at Miss Campbell, who was standing in the doorway. "I started out but my neighbor asked me for a lift. On the way my car broke down." He said this very evenly and clearly. "That's what happened. It's my story and I'm sticking to it."

Miss Campbell turned on her heel and went away.

"I didn't say anything," Peter said. "I just asked."

"Well, I was going to take Miss Campbell out last night after we'd finished but the car passed out and this neighbor was with me. So I finally got a fellow to push me into a garage. And then Miss Campbell walked past about that time and saw me sitting in the car with my next-door-neighbor who happens to be nearly as good-looking as Miss Campbell."

Peter grinned. "That's very funny."

Jack gave him a sour look. "I've been pestering Miss Campbell to come out with me ever since she came to work here. And now this happens. It isn't funny."

"It is to me," Peter said. "My wife is accusing me of being unfaithful because of these books they read and discuss at her frightful club. Everything she reads takes seed. And seeing Miss Campbell and me alone last night made the seed take root."

"Women are the devil," Jack said.

"If I were unfaithful, which I'm not," said Peter, "I wouldn't pick on someone who works for me."

"Women get an idea into their heads and they don't get it out until it wears out, or until it's knocked out. If Miss Campbell were my wife I'd put her across my knee."

"If she were your wife you'd do nothing of the kind," said Peter. "You unmarried men are just green."

"Listen," Jack said. "A married man is nothing but a mouse — a frightened mouse."

"A married man has to use finesse," Peter said. "He has to think like lightning to combat, in a few minutes, the ideas it takes his wife all day to dream up. He has to be sharp as a knife. Look at me—I have to combat all the brainy psychiatrists who write the books my wife has been reading, and I have to do it in a hurry. I can't take a year or two to write a book."

"You'd better put her across your knee," said Jack.

Peter shook his head. "At the moment I'm nothing but an unfaithful statistic, but give me time."

Peter went to the front of the shop. Miss Campbell was dusting shelves.

"Miss Campbell," said Peter, "I think Jack was telling the truth about last night."

"I wouldn't know," said Miss Campbell.

"Why is it," Peter said, "that a woman loves to put a man through his paces even when she knows he hasn't done anything wrong?"

Miss Campbell tipped her head towards Peter. Her eyes twinkled. "Oh, because," she said.

"Great," said Peter. "That's typical of a woman."

"Do you really want to know?"

"If anyone can tell me it would be very helpful."

"Well, because she likes to see him squirm — to see how far he'll go to prove that he hasn't done anything wrong. The farther he goes, the more certain she is that he is in love with her."

Peter squinted at her. "You didn't get that out of a book, did you?"

"A book? Certainly not. No woman needs to read a book to learn that sort of thing."

"Then why the devil do they read those books about marriage and sex?"

"Oh, sometimes they read them because other women are reading them. Or sometimes they read them to corroborate what they already know. But they don't really need books like that."

"Poor Jack," Peter said. He walked away.

THE fact that Anne hadn't got up for breakfast nagged at him and finally settled in his stomach like a green apple, and for half the morning he told himself that there was no reason for her attitude, that she was barmy, or feminine, and that if she wanted to behave like that—well, she could jolly well behave like that for all he cared.

By eleven o'clock remorse had set in. Women or no women—putting him through his paces or not—books or no books—she was his wife and he loved her. He should have taken her in his arms and kissed her. He should have whispered sweet nothings in her ear.

He decided to go home for lunch and make amends. Normally he had his lunch at the pub with ten other men, but at noon he got into his car and drove home. He reviewed his strategy. He visualised how happy Anne would be to see him. He hopped up the steps and opened the door. He yelled: "Hallo, beautiful!"

There was a mumbled answer from the bathroom. Peter went to the door and peered in. Anne was bent over the bath, washing her hair.

"It's me, Anne," Peter said. "I'm home for lunch." He didn't see how he was going to take her in his arms while she was washing her hair.

Anne mumbled something that sounded like: "Oh, for heaven's sake!"

He stood on one foot and then on the other while she rinsed her hair. He said again: "I came home for lunch to be with you."

She raised her head, grabbed a towel and buried her head in it, rubbing vigorously.

"Isn't that nice?" said Peter.

Presently she raised her head. "Did you say you'd come home for lunch?"

Peter nodded. He grinned fatuously.

"I thought it would be nice. I thought we could talk."

"But I haven't anything ready, and there isn't a thing in the house. Why didn't you tell me you were coming home for lunch?"

"I wanted to surprise you," Peter said.

"I've dozens of things to do. I've got a big basket of ironing and I

want to lengthen my skirt and my hair's all wet."

"If you don't want me," Peter said, injured, "I'll go back to town and eat."

"Oh, as you're here, I'll cook you something." She fastened the towel round her head and went into the kitchen.

Peter followed her. He considered taking her in his arms, but this didn't seem the right moment. While she got out corned beef and peeled some potatoes he hovered round her, watching his opportunity, but none came.

THIS WINS £5

THE £5 prize for renaming the story titled "Grandma Liked 'Em Gay" (PB, 13/8/49) was won by Mrs. Ethel Fields, 438 Marrickville Road, Marrickville, NSW. Her title was "Glamor for the Angels."

Presently, she said: "Here's your lunch. Sorry it's so dull. Now I must set my hair."

Peter ate his lunch in solitude and silence and, when he finished, went to the bedroom where Anne was setting her hair. "Well, I'm going."

"All right," Anne said.

"Goodbye," he said.

"Goodbye."

Peter left the house and drove back to the shop. He looked at Miss Campbell with little enthusiasm.

"Miss Campbell," he said, without preamble, "women don't want attention. Women want to be alone. They want to wash their hair and do the ironing and let down skirts."

Miss Campbell stared.

"I considered all the things you said and I went home for lunch to spend an hour with my wife."

"Oh, no!" said Miss Campbell.

"Oh, yes."

"You should have known better. How long have you been married?"

"Four years—and what should I have known better?"

"No woman alive wants a man to come home to lunch."

"Why not?"

"Because when a man gets out of the house in the morning she can get something done. She can read the paper, dawdle over cups of tea, listen to the wireless, and finally she starts her day. She plans her work, and the surest way of ruining her day is to have some hungry male stamping into the house for lunch."

"But you said that women like to see how far a man will go to prove—"

"Well, women want them to be devoted, to spend time with them, but they don't want men to be in the way."

"For heaven's sake," Peter said. "Are we supposed to be magicians?"

"You're supposed to be devoted, loving, faithful and kind, and you're

supposed to spend as much time as possible with your wife without being constantly underfoot."

Peter shook his head and went back to Jack.

"How are you getting on with Miss Campbell?"

Jack straightened his shoulders. "The more I think about it, the more I think she needs a good spanking."

"Listen, Jack," Peter said. "You have to be faithful but not ever-present. You must be ever-present but keep out of sight. Be loving, but not when they're washing their hair. Be home for meals but don't go home for lunch. And that's straight from the horse's mouth."

Jack scratched his head. Peter wondered how long a man had to be married before he knew something about being a husband. Anne was giving him a bad time because she never saw him, and now Miss Campbell told him that no woman wants a man around all the time.

That night when he got home, Anne was lying on the sofa reading a magazine. When she saw him she stretched, sighed, and rubbed the back of her neck.

"Oh, I'm tired," she said. "I did the ironing, set my hair, let down my skirt and worked in the garden until fifteen minutes ago."

Peter bent down and kissed her. "Poor kid. How about a drink?"

Anne shook her head. "I laid out your things. You'd better hurry or you'll be late." She stretched again. "While you're playing squash I'm going to have a hot bath, do my nails and read in bed."

"I'm not playing squash."

"But why? You always do on Wednesdays."

"I thought we could go out somewhere together tonight. I thought we might have dinner and dance at the Ace of Spades."

"Dance!" Anne shrieked. "Are you sure you aren't playing squash?"

PETER shook his head. "I'd rather stay here with you. I'll tell you what—if you're too tired to go out I'll help you to cook the dinner. Or, better still, I'll cook it for you. What would you like?"

"I'd like a hot bath," Anne said grimly. "Anyway, I didn't know you were going to be in for dinner, so I had only some corned beef for myself—and you ate that for lunch. There isn't a thing in the house."

"Eggs and bacon," Peter said heartily.

"You had the last egg for breakfast and we've finished the bacon." She got wearily off the sofa. "I think there's a tin of salmon. We can have that—and peas."

While she got the dinner Peter crowded into the little kitchen. He parked himself on the kitchen table and shelled peas. Anne walked around him half a dozen times, finally came too close, knocked the peas on the floor and yelled: "Peter! Go into the front room and read the paper. Keep out of the way!"

Peter said: "All right—all right—if you don't want me here just say so."

(Continued on page 24)

Martha Jean

Everybody was surprised to see a girl in Nick's Place, and Nick had his own ideas of how she should pay for her coffee and sandwiches.



WE had been booted out of a flat in the West End where we had caught up with one of the floating crap games and instead of making the rounds on a raw night like that, we took a short cut across town to Nick's Place.

Sleet was falling, and the wind was as sharp as knife-blades. We met two or three men on the way; they were bent almost double against the icy wind, holding their hats and coats with numb fingers.

"What did you let them throw us out for, Hal?" The Type said. "There's no law against a man following a public crap game. I've gone broke in better flats than that one, anyway."

The Type bumped into a lamp-post. He turned round and kicked the iron pole with his foot.

"Winter's a hell of a time of year," he said. "Let's go home."

"Nick's Place will be heated up," I said. "Come on, and we'll look in there for a while."

The usual all-night crowd was standing around the stove in Nick's Place, warming their fingers against the red-hot sides of the blast heater. Como, the Negro porter, stoked the fire and kept his back turned on the sleet that slashed against the door and windows.

When The Type and I walked in, Nick ran up from somewhere and met us half-way.

"I'm going to close up early tonight," Nick said. "You boys will have to go home for a change. Won't your folks be surprised to see you, though?"

"You mean you're telling us to get out?" The Type said.

"There's no money in keeping open on a night like this," Nick argued. "I'd just be wasting heat and light, and getting nowhere at all."

"Hello, Nick," I said. "How about lending me a dollar till some time

next week? Here's how it is. I started out—"

"No loans tonight, boys," he said. "I'm going to close up right away."

Como shivered.

"If it's all the same to you, Mr. Nick," Como said, "I'd just as soon stay and sleep right here on the floor by the stove tonight. Way out where I live, my old woman—"

"And burn up half a ton of coal," Nick said.

"I won't burn but one little shovel-ful the whole night long," Como pleaded. "A black man like me would die of pneumonia if I had to go out in that cold sleet tonight."

"You drag yourself out of here in half an hour, Como," Nick told him. "After you sweep out, I don't care where you go."

The crowd round the stove pressed a little closer at the prospect of having to leave the warm room.

Nick came around the stove behind me. He shoved his thumb into my ribs.

"Wake up, Hal," he said. "What's the matter with you? Broke again? No drinks, no eats, no playing the machines?"

"I'm cleaned out tonight, Nick," I told him. "If I hadn't got kicked out of a game over in the West End, I'd have been on my feet."

NICK shrugged his shoulders and walked over to the wall where the row of slot machines stood on the tables. He shoved his fingers into the cups at the bottom of the machines where sometimes he found a nickel or a quarter somebody left behind.

"You boys are rotten sports," Nick said, coming back to the stove. "Why don't you go out and raise some money to play the machines with? The Type hasn't had a dime in his pocket this week."

"What's the matter with you, Nick?" The Type said. "What do you want me to do? Go out and crack a bank?"

"You've still got six dollars of mine right now," Nick said. "I've got to have a pay-day soon."

"I'll see what I can do," The Type told him.

Como was dumping a scuttle of coal into the stove when the front door burst open in a whirl of sleet and icy air. Everybody turned and looked in that direction just as a girl's head was seen outside. She stepped into the doorway.

"Shut the door," Nick said.

Como ran to the front and closed the door.

Everybody looked surprised at the sight of a girl in Nick's Place. I had never seen one there before; I had never heard of a girl entering the place. Nick's was a hangout for men

and boys, and there was nothing there except the slot machines and pool tables.

The lunch-counter was hardly a place to come for a meal. Nick and Como had drinks and a few sandwiches, but that was all.

The forlorn-looking girl stood at the front of the room, shivering a little. The sleet on her hair and coat began to melt in the warm air, but her shoes were wet.

"Who's that?" the Type said. "She doesn't look like one of the girls around the corner to me. I never saw her before."

Como came back and dumped another scuttleful of coal into the iron heater. It was red-hot all over.

"I'll bet she ran away from home," The Type said.

Nick had gone up to the girl, and he was looking at her closely. She drew away from him, and he had to go and stand with his back against the door to keep her from running out into the street.

"This is a hell of a place for a runaway country girl to land," The Type said.

"She won't stay in here long," I said. "As soon as she sees what she's got herself into, she'll leave."

The Type looked at the faces in the crowd around the stove.

"I'd hate to see . . ."

Nick said something to the girl, and The Type stopped to hear what it was.

"If anybody starts getting fresh with her," I said, "I'm going to start something. I'm not going to stay here and see her get pushed around."

The Type did not pay any attention to what I had said. He walked a little closer to the front in order to hear what Nick was saying to her.

The girl found her handkerchief and wiped the tears that sprang into her eyes.

"What do you want?" Nick said. She shook her head.

"What did you come in here for if you don't want anything?" Nick asked her. "What's up?"

SHE shook her head again. She was a girl about fifteen or sixteen, and a lot prettier than any of the girls in the house around the corner. To look at her reminded you of the girls you had seen going to Sunday school on Sunday mornings.

"Hungry?" Nick asked her.

She made no reply, but it was easy to see that she had come in for something to eat, thinking that Nick's Place was a cafe.

"Como," Nick yelled. "Bring us up some coffee and a couple of sandwiches. Get a move on!"

"Yes, sir!" Como said, patting the

● NOTE.—All characters and incidents in this story are imaginary and if any name used be that of a living person, such use is due to inadvertence and is not intended to refer to such person.

BY ERSKINE CALDWELL

warmth of the stove before hurrying to the lunch counter.

Nick led the girl to the counter and made her sit down on one of the stools. He sat down beside her, between her and the door.

The boys around the stove began winking at each other, nodding their heads at Nick and the girl.

When Como had the coffee hot, Nick asked her what her name was.

"Martha Jean," she said without hesitation.

Nick sat a little closer.

"Where do you live?"

Martha Jean shook her head, the tears springing to her eyes once more. Nick was satisfied. He did not ask her any more questions.

"When she finishes, give her a slice of cake, Como," Nick said, getting up.

Como shook his head.

"There ain't no cake, Mr. Nick," Como said.

Nick flared up. "I said give her cake, Como," he shouted. "When I say give her cake, I mean give it to her!"

"Yes, sir, boss!" Como said, shaking his head.

NICK came over towards the stove, walking sideways while he tried to keep his eyes on Martha Jean, and washing his hands in the air. When he got to the stove, he looked the crowd over, and picked on The Type to glare at, as usual.

"All right now, you boys beat it somewhere else. Go on home, or somewhere. I'm closing up for the night."

Nobody made a move to leave.

Nick shoved The Type away from the stove.

"The next time you come back, have that six dollars you owe me," Nick told him, pushing.

"What the hell, Nick?" The Type said. "You've never hurried me for anything on the books like this before. What's the matter with you?"

"I had a bad dream last night," Nick said. "I dreamed that they hauled you off to a big stone-walled building and you got electrocuted. I've got to look out for myself now."

Some of the crowd moved away from the stove, but nobody left the room.

Nick shoved me hard.

"What's the big hurry, Nick?" I said to him.

"That's my business," Nick said. "Get a move on."

"When is the girl going?"

"Martha Jean's staying."

"You can't do that, Nick," I said. "She came in here to get something to eat. She's nothing to me, but I hate to see her get pushed about like one of the girls around the corner."

"You're going to talk yourself out of a good thing, Hal," he said. "Don't I lend you money every time you ask for it, almost? Don't I keep you posted on good things? Don't I bail your brother-in-law out every



time he's picked up? What's the matter with you?"

Nick shoved me again, harder than before.

"What are you going to do with her?" I said.

"That's Nick's business," he answered. "If you know what's good for you, Hal, you'll get out of here before you talk too much."

The rest of the crowd was standing around the door, watching the girl. The Type was buttoning up his coat to leave.

Nick shoved me again.

"When you get home tonight, Hal," he said, pushing and shoving me towards the door, "tell your folks to give you something to do if they're not going to give you any spending money. I can't be having you hanging around my place if you don't have any money to play the machines with."

Nick turned his back on me and went over to where the girl was seated at the counter. She had finished eating, and Nick took her arm and pulled her towards the stove. She tried to pull away from him, but during all that time she had not raised her eyes to look at anybody in the room.

He dragged her to the stove.

"Cold, Martha Jean?" he asked her, putting his arms around her.

Some of the crowd had already left. Nearly all the fellows were letting Nick drive them out because they were afraid he would stop making loans when they were broke.

BESIDES that, there were the tips Nick was always passing out when he got news of a sure thing to bet on. If Nick stopped letting us in on sure things, nearly everybody would stop getting spending money. Nick always got it all back, sooner or later, in the slot machines. Nick's crowd was afraid not to do what he told them to do.

The Type and I stood at the door watching Nick and Martha Jean at the stove.

"Got a place to stay tonight?" he asked her.

She answered him with a shake of her head and with a shiver that convulsed her whole body.

"How long have you been in

town?" he asked.

"I came today," Martha Jean said.

"Looking for a job?"

"Yes."

Nick squeezed her with his arm.

"You don't have to worry about that any more," he told her, trying to raise her face up to his. "I'll fix everything for you."

Martha Jean tried again to get away from him, but Nick put both arms around her and held her tight to his side.

"Como," Nick said. "Go upstairs and fix a place for Martha Jean. Fix up the front room for her, the one with the new bed and chairs in it. Get a move on!"

"Yes, sir, boss!" Como said, tapping the red-hot stove with his fingers.

Martha Jean looked up for the first time.

THERE was a startled expression in her eyes. When she turned towards The Type and me, I could not keep from going to her. She looked as helpless as a rabbit that had been caught in a steel trap for two or three days.

Nick turned round and glared at me.

Como could be heard stamping around upstairs in the room overhead. He was fixing things in a hurry so he could get back downstairs to the red-hot stove.

"Do you want to stay here with him?" I said to her, edging closer. "Or do you want to leave?"

Martha Jean started to say something. Her tears began flowing again, and she fought Nick desperately.

"What did I tell you, Hal?" Nick said angrily. "You wouldn't believe me, would you?"

He turned round and shook his head at me.

"Didn't I tell you you'd talk yourself out of a good thing? You wouldn't believe me, would you?"

He turned the girl loose for a moment, and swung round on his heels. Before I had a chance to duck, his fist flew at my head. The next thing I knew I was on the floor, and things were going round.

I could not see what The Type was

(Continued on Page 30)

Death Kept Him Waiting

BY LAURENCE KIRK

The murderer had got away with his crime, though the consequences had stayed with him for twenty-six years. Now there was another murder in the same place.

THE news broke quietly on the little town. It came in at the back door with the milk or the morning newspapers and caused a stir in the kitchen before it penetrated to other parts of the house.

In the better-class neighborhood it was in the dining-room over breakfast that it reached the master or the mistress. The woman who had prepared the breakfast, whether she was cook or maid or daily help, could not contain the information any longer and would blurt it out one way or another. The rougher kind would give it brutally as she came into the room; the better trained, discreetly as she went out. Some would begin: "Excuse me, madam, but . . ." and others would make no excuse at all.

In either case there was the news by word of mouth; and in the little town of Crayden that meant more than anything in print.

For Crayden was one of those peaceful English towns with its roots in the past. It read its newspapers, but did not recognise the events described therein as belonging to the neighborly, peaceful world in which it lived.

It knew that in many parts of Europe, India and China people were starving in their millions, being hunted, and dying in their hundreds of thousands. It was sorry that such things should happen and sent small contributions to alleviate the distress; but that other world of mass violence and intrigue, of hunter and hunted, seemed very remote from the quiet streets of Crayden, with its timbered houses and tiled roofs, or from the grander mansions that surrounded it.

BUT even though Crayden remained so calm over the fate of millions of Chinese, it could be stirred to the core over anything untoward that happened to one of its own inhabitants.

Even a broken leg or a case of pneumonia could cause quite a commotion. And this was a great deal more than that. For the second time in twenty-six years violence had come to Crayden, stealthily, suddenly, in the night; and what was more disturbing, in exactly the same form.

• NOTE.—All characters and incidents in this story are imaginary and if any name used be that of a living person, such use is due to inadvertence and is not intended to refer to such person.

Here in cross section is how Crayden awoke to the news that quiet September morning.

At The Limes, in Harnett Street, where Mrs. Spenser lived alone, with her capped and aproned maid and where everything was just so, the white-haired old lady was just filling her cup from the polished silver teapot when Mary, who belonged to the same white-haired generation, paused respectfully at the door.

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but there's something which I think you ought to know."

Mrs. Spenser finished pouring her tea.

"Yes, Mary, what is it?"

"That new Mr. Croad, ma'am," Mary braced herself. "He was found dead this morning."

"Good gracious!" Mrs. Spenser put the teapot down carefully. "I didn't even know he was ill. Was he found in his bed, Mary?"

"No, ma'am." Mary braced herself still further. "He was found hanging to an oak tree in his park."

MRS SPENSER'S stiff back stiffened visibly. Any comment that she could have made seemed hopelessly inadequate; for she remembered only too well how, twenty-six years earlier, the same Mary, in almost the same words, had announced that Mr. Jekyll had been found hanging to a beech-tree in his park. And she knew that the killer of Mr. Jekyll had never been discovered.

Round the corner in St. Peter's Street, Jessie, the daily help, was somewhat less reserved in her delivery of the news. She worked for Mr. Timkin, the local builder; and while Mrs. Timkin was pouring out the tea Jessie loitered by Mr. Timkin's elbow as he unfolded the newspaper.

"There's a bit of news you won't find in that there, sir," she began.

"Oh, what's happened now?" Mr. Timkin said lightly.

"Mr. Croad, sir. Found dead this morning."

Mrs. Timkin put the teapot down.

"Good gracious, Jessie! I'm sorry to hear that."

"Some's not so sorry, so I've heard," Jessie went on darkly.

Mr. Timkin folded up the paper again.

"Better be careful what you say, Jessie," he warned her. "Was he found dead in his room?"

"No, not in his room, sir. He was found 'anging to an oak tree in his park."

"Good gracious!" Mrs. Timkin stared at her husband, thinking of all the stir over Mr. Jekyll twenty-six years ago, when they were newly married.

Jessie then really got under way.

"That's 'ow he was found, madam. And they do say that he wasn't active enough to go and 'ang himself. Not even if he had a reason—which he hadn't. That's what they say, sir. Foul play, they say, sir. Murder. And as you know, it's not the first time it's 'appened in these parts, either."

With that Jessie went back to the kitchen and left them to their breakfast. Mr. Timkin never looked at the newspaper that morning.

The situation was dealt with in rather a different manner in Walnut Tree Lane, two streets away. Kathleen Stout was the wife of Sergeant Stout, of the local police. She did not know why the telephone had rung at two in the morning, nor why her husband had immediately put on his uniform and left her alone in the double bed. Thanks to the milkman, however, she did know at least an hour before Sergeant Stout returned very belatedly for his breakfast. And she took particular trouble over his breakfast, giving him an extra rasher of bacon; for the sergeant was inclined to be a bit cagey over official information.

"Well, Albert," She sat down beside him as soon as he had had time to relax. "So it's true, then?"

"What's true?" he asked cautiously.

"That Mr. Croad's been strangled and hanged just like Mr. Jekyll was?"

"Now where on earth did you get all that?"

"From the milkman. Everybody knows it. So it's no good pretending."

"People talk too much," Albert said with his mouth full.

KATHLEEN waited nearly half a minute. She knew she could get anything out of her husband if she went about it the right way; and the right way was to let him enlarge on his own theories, of which he had plenty.

"What kind of a rope was it?" she asked.

"Just an ordinary rope," he said, unwarily. "One that marks the boundary on the cricket ground, if you must know. There's a length missing there."

"So it was premeditated?"

"I'm not saying whether it was premeditated or not."

"Do you think it was the same man who done in Mr. Jekyll that way?"

"As far as we know it may have been suicide."

"Oh, come on, Albert. You know it wasn't suicide last time. I think it's the same man up to his tricks again."

Albert wiped his mouth appreciatively. It was good bacon.

"Well, I don't," he said flatly.

"If that man is still alive he'd be an old man now . . . This was a young man's job. There are plenty of young men back from the war and most of them have learned a trick or two. Violence! Public violence leads to private violence. People don't think of that when they start making wars, don't realise the cleaning up that the police are left to do. School for crime, that's what the Army is. And the police are left to cope with it. Single handed!"

Kathleen looked at him admiringly.

"But if it isn't the same man," she persisted, "why was it done in exactly the same way?"

Albert ended his breakfast with a long draught of strong tea.

"Not much doubt about that," he ended. "I'm not saying that the killing of Mr. Jekyll was the perfect crime. But the killer was never found out, and that's as near perfect for a crime as the average killer needs."

Finally, in Curfew Street, Mr. Grynor lived alone at number seven. He was a widower, and ever since his wife died he had cooked and cared for himself. He was over fifty but looked much older. He had gone very grey, and people were in the habit of calling him poor Mr. Grynor. Certainly he was an eccentric, never going out except to his work, which was at the jam factory, or to his one hobby, which was bird-watching.

He knew the note of every bird in the region and could imitate them so that you did not know whether it was Mr. Grynor calling or the bird itself. A bit cracked, they all thought him; but he was very gentle and very harmless.

Nobody knew him closely enough to say whether he slept well or badly; but he was certainly an early riser and was generally downstairs in his kitchen when the milkman called. He was there that September morning and opened the door when he heard the milkman.

The milkman handed him his half pint and said: "Good morning, Mr. Grynor. Nice day." Mr. Grynor agreed that it was a nice day, and the milkman was going to leave it at that. It seemed hardly worth while to pass on the news to anyone as reserved and unresponsive as poor old Grynor.

However, he thought better of it, and he went on: "Nasty shock we've had for such a fine morning!"

"Nasty shock?" Mr. Grynor repeated vaguely.

"Yes, Mr. Grynor." The milkman warmed to his work. "Mr. Croad has been found hanged in his park, just as Mr. Jekyll was all that time ago."

Mr. Grynor stared incredulously. "What! Hanged to a tree?" he asked.

"That's right," the milkman said. "Police are still investigating. Thought I'd just let you know. It'll be all over the town soon."

Mr. Grynor thanked him vaguely and shut the door and locked it. He then walked over to the sink with the half-pint bottle of milk in his hand and stood for a moment looking out of the window thoughtfully at the brick wall opposite.

He had reason to be thoughtful; for he was the man who had killed Mr. Jekyll twenty-six years ago.

Crayden was uneasy in the days that followed. It did not like being

In Grynor's case the crime was very unsuccessful. It put an end to Mr. Jekyll's life, but that did not lead to any of the results intended. And Grynor's instinct for violence was not ingrained.

He was the despair of his sergeant in the first World War. At bayonet practice he approached the dummy in a gentle and apologetic manner and it seemed incredible that he could ever make a soldier.

Later, however, when some stimulus awoke him out of his natural timidity, he could be both crafty and ruthless in his violence. But some definite stimulus was always required. It might be a man shot dead by his side or just some disparagement of his own importance, as when his last saved-up cigarette was shot out of his hand.

He was a cobbler's son with no pretensions of being a gentleman; but when he was finally commissioned on active service he began to have other ideas. He wanted to improve himself. And when in his new lieutenant's uniform, on his last leave before the end of the war, he met Mary Jekyll and she seemed to like him, he thought he knew how to make the improvement.

Mary was a lady and she lived with her uncle at the Grange. Even Mr. Jekyll had smiled at him then. Mr. Jekyll had made a lot of money in business in the war; and such men were always polite to young men in uniform as long as the war still lasted.

It was very different when Grynor was demobilised a few years later and was a civilian again. Mary still met him in secret and led him on, but he was not asked to the Grange any more. And Mr. Jekyll stopped him suddenly in the road one morning and gave him a warning.

He had found out about the secret meetings with Mary, and he brandished his stick and treated Grynor as though he were a servant who had stolen something. He told him that the war was over and that things were different. He had better learn to keep his place or it would be the worse for him.

Grynor saw Mary again that very evening. She was going to defy her uncle, she told him. But it would have to be very secret. He could turn her out and make her penniless if he wanted to. From that, murder grew in Grynor's heart. He was Sir Galahad and he had been treated as a scullion. He saw Mr. Jekyll as the one impediment to all his desires and ambitions, and he



reminded of skeletons in its cupboard, nor did it like to think that it was built on the same hot and sordid human clay as the rough world outside it. Many things were whispered at back doors and street corners, but the one question that nobody paused to consider was how the killer of Mr. Jekyll had developed in twenty-six years' time.

Had he gone from violence to violence or was he torn with remorse? How would killers develop in that time if they were allowed to go freely about their daily business? Were the gallows and the electric chair really the protectors of the public or were they just a gruesome locking of the stable door after the horse had gone?

There was no certain answer to these questions if they had been asked. It probably depended on two things: first, whether the instinct for violence was ingrained like the craving of an alcoholic; and second, more simply, whether the crime was successful.

thought that if that obstacle was removed nothing could stop his getting Mary.

And thanks to his bird-watching he knew Mr. Jekyll's habits. He always took a walk in his grounds alone in the dusk. The same walk at the same time. It reminded Grynor of a certain German sentry who had been too regular in his habits. Grynor had dropped on to his back out of a tree and strangled him before he could make a sound. And it was just the same with Mr. Jekyll.

Grynor had been waiting in the tree on a leafy branch above the path two nights before the opportunity came. The first night Mr. Jekyll did not take his walk. The second he was too wide to the left. But the third it was just right. Grynor was suddenly on his back, with the scarf round his throat.

It was even quicker than with the sentry. Mr. Jekyll was an older man. And when he was quite still Grynor pulled the rope down from the tree where it was hidden and hoisted him up. It was supposed to look like suicide, but the police had grave doubts about that.

Grynor could see the whole picture clearly as he stared at the wall opposite the kitchen sink; the old man walking in the path; the young man dropping from the tree. He quivered at the thought of it. It was so vivid that he could hear the grunt that Mr. Jekyll gave as he landed on his back, and feel the flabbiness of his throat in his hands.

Grynor looked at his hands incredulously. He could not believe that they were the same hands that had done that thing. So quickly. So quietly. And to such very little purpose! It must have been another man. Very different from him.

But then he remembered other things as well. Nobody had seen him near the park any of those nights. A man who can creep up beside a nightingale is not likely to be detected by a human being; and he had disguised himself as a gypsy as well. But his meetings with Mary were known and he was questioned by the police like a good many others. She suspected nothing and they both had the same story. Her guardian did not approve, but they thought he would change his mind in time. There was nothing criminal in that.

The little suspicion that there was veered away from Grynor on to some poacher, some gypsy, some person unknown; and Grynor waited quietly for the ripe fruit to drop into his hands.

But the fruit never dropped.

Mary had gone away to stay with friends after her uncle's death, and very soon she wrote quite calmly and clearly saying that it had all been a mistake. She hoped it would not be a shock to him, but she was engaged. It was useless for him to try to see her again or to write. Her mind was made up, but she wished him good luck

and every happiness in the future.

The bottom dropped out of Grynor's emotional life when he had that letter. He kept on writing, but there was never any reply. And then very soon the bottom dropped out of his financial life as well. The chicken farm in which he had invested his gratuity turned out to be a dud and his partner a crook, and he had to take a paid menial job to keep himself.

All the spirit had gone out of him. He saw himself now as Mr. Jekyll had seen him: a pretentious little upstart with nothing behind him and nothing in front. There was no



"All right—who the heck hiccupped?"

stimulus to arouse him and he grew to accept that valuation.

Frustration followed frustration.

When he married two years later he picked on an ailing, querulous woman who died without even giving him a son, and he went from one ill-paid job to another. The idea grew on him that his fate was pre-ordained and that he could not escape it in any way. He must expiate his crime; the crime of being a fool, of killing the man who had told him truthfully how little good he was.

And so as the years passed slowly on, he became more and more reserved and withdrawn into himself, and even a little crazy. The only remaining spark in his life was his knowledge of birds and his love for them. But there was a frustration even in that. He might have won success as a naturalist but he could not put what he knew down on paper.

Strange ideas began to enter Grynor's mind during the next few days; some just passed in and out and some lingered; some were confused and some were very clear indeed. It never occurred to him that any suspicion could fall on him, and none did. But there was just one thought that persisted until it almost became an obsession. He did not want the killer to be found. He wanted him to go on as he had

gone, to meet frustration and despair, to be caught and held in the relentless machinery of years, to suffer the slow way as he had done.

This idea overshadowed everything else in his mind, but the observant part of his brain remained quite clear and moved with the same kind of precision as Sergeant Stout's. In one way he was better equipped than Sergeant Stout to put two and two together; for a bird-watcher sees many things that have nothing to do with birds. Unexpected lovers pass him as he lies concealed. Vans are loaded or unloaded in strange places. And men who do not know each other in daylight meet and whisper in the dark.

Grynor could have blackmailed more than one inhabitant of Crayden if he had had any leaning that way.

He still could not put his finger on it, but he knew that some time in the past month he had seen something which could put him on the right track. The picture kept appearing before his eyes, but there was always something important missing. So in the meantime he counted up the young men who were back from this other war.

There was Jim Stack and Peter Craill, and Johnny Snowe, and William Bent. One had been in North Africa and one in Burma, and one a prisoner with the Japs and one with the Germans. They all seemed quiet young men, but no one knew what was locked up in their hearts. And what of Mr. Croad himself? He had no daughter or ward, so it could not be that. And he was a newcomer, too.

What is one to think of a man who at the end of a war suddenly buys a large property near a small country town? A man who speaks with a common accent and has no friends in the place? Where did he get his money and why did he suddenly want to seem respectable? Did he, too, take a walk in his park in the dusk? Or was it true, as was whispered in the town, that there were tyre marks near the tree and that he had been killed elsewhere in a car and strung up just to make it look the same as the Jekyll case?

G RYNNOR sat at home looking at his fingers from which the power of violence had departed. But there was still some cunning as well as craziness in his head. When he heard that William Bent was being held by the police he knew instinctively that they were on the wrong track. William could not account for his movements that night. Grynor could not account for them either, but he had seen William out with a married woman only a few nights before the crime. And that might be the reason for his silence.

In any case, Grynor suddenly woke up in the night and remembered the clue he was looking for; at least, the first half of it. It had been a brown owl he had been studying that evening a week before the crime, just inside the Croad estate near the lodge gates. It was quite dark. But suddenly a

car had come along the road and turned by the gates, and for an instant in the glare of its headlights he had seen two men talking where there had only been shadow a moment before. And one was Mr. Croad and the other man he had not recognised.

Grynor sat up in bed.

That other face with the sharp nose looking so yellow in the headlights of the car! Wasn't it the same face that he had seen at the post office that day? Another young man who had been away at the war and come back. Joe Routledge. But Joe wasn't like Jim Stack and Peter Craill and the others. No North Africa for him. He was Crayden's black sheep and had spent the war alternately in detention barracks or at large as a deserter.

How had he supported himself as a deserter? In the blackmarket probably. How had he come to know Croad? In the same place, no doubt. How had Croad learned of Crayden? Through Joe, possibly.

Grynor remembered their faces in the crude glare of the headlights. They were the faces of men who did not like the light flashed on them like that, faces that preferred concealment. And out of their dealings with each other what had each of them got? Croad, a comfortable house with several bathrooms, and Joe Routledge two sentences of detention.

It was a set-up for murder, however that murder took place; and Grynor decided that Joe was the killer.

From that moment the crazier side of Grynor's mind took control. The police mustn't get Joe Routledge. They mustn't! *They mustn't!* He must work out his damnation the slow, hard way. So Grynor waited and twisted his hands. There was nothing to worry about so long as William Bent was the suspect. Grynor had grown so warped that he would have let William hang for something he hadn't done. That didn't matter.

All that mattered was that Joe Routledge should escape the law and pay in the other harder coin.

But then it was whispered that William Bent had been cleared and that Joe Routledge had been had in for questioning. Grynor knew then that the time had come for action. There was no time to lose. Joe might confess, might escape life. But he mustn't! He mustn't!

And then suddenly Grynor thought he saw the way quite clearly. All that he had to do was to go and confess to both crimes. In that way he would end his own misery and

start Joe Routledge off on his. It was all too simple.

As first he intended to go straight to the police. But then he found that there was something more that he wanted than that. He wanted to speak to Joe, to see the hunted look that there would be in his eyes, and then to show himself as his benefactor. He was too far gone to realise that Joe Routledge was too scared to believe in benefactors.

JOE was in when he knocked on the door of his lodgings that evening. He had the hunted look which he knew would be there, and he only opened the door an inch.

"Yes? What do you want?"

"You know me," Grynor began soothingly. "Mr. Grynor. Live in Curfew Street. I didn't know you were back until I saw you in the post office."

"Well, what of it?" Joe had not opened the door any wider.



"I thought I could help you. After all, I knew you before the war. I know you're all right."

Joe unwillingly let him into the room, and Grynor sat down by the window, fingering his hat.

"I'm not in need of help," Joe said.

"Of course you're not," Grynor answered quietly. "It's just that there's nothing to worry about. I know who killed Mr. Croad."

Joe stared at him darkly. "You do?"

"Yes, And I know who killed Mr. Jekyll, too."

"Well, then, why haven't you been to the police?"

"I'm just going—to confess."

Joe guessed that he had a madman on his hands. A very dangerous madman. He tried to humor him.

"So you're going to the police?"

"Yes, straight away."

"And what are you going to confess?"

"That I killed both Mr. Jekyll and Mr. Croad."

"And you think they're going to believe you?"

"Yes. Why not? I did it. I'll tell you how I killed Mr. Jekyll if you like. It was rather clever."

"All right. Go on."

Grynor told him and Joe listened. He still thought he had a madman on his hands.

"Well, that's very interesting," he said at the end. "And I suppose you killed Mr. Croad just the same way?"

"That's right. It comes easy once you've done it."

"You must be stronger than you look, Mr. Grynor."

"Oh, I am. Much stronger."

"And why did you kill Mr. Croad? Did you want to marry his niece, too?"

Now Grynor realised that Joe had not believed a word he was saying, and he noticed a new hard look in his eye. He suddenly became frightened.

"Well, I won't keep you any longer." He got up quickly. "There'll

be nothing to worry about after I've been to the police."

"Sit down!" Joe said. He was not thinking of Grynor as a madman any longer, but as someone who knew too much.

Joe went on: "You used to do a bit of bird-watching in the old days, didn't you?"

"Yes. But I really am going to confess."

"Been bird-watching recently?"

"Not much. Hardly at all."

"Takes you out into odd places at odd times, doesn't it? And you see things?"

Grynor did not reply. He watched helplessly as Joe

picked up the poker and came towards him. He wasn't frightened for himself now, only distressed that he should fail so miserably a second time.

"No, no, no!" he cried. "If you do that they'll get you. It was better my way. I did mean to confess."

Those were the last words that Grynor spoke. It was Joe Routledge who went to the police that evening and confessed to the murders both of Croad and Grynor. He was tired; and there was no longer any chance of escape with Grynor's body in his room.

The next morning the news came round with the milk as it had before; and Crayden breathed again. But while people were quite ready to believe that it was Joe Routledge who had killed both the other two, very few thought that Grynor had had anything to do with the death of Mr. Jekyll. He was just a poor, harmless old man with bats in the belfry.

THE END ★ ★

Page Thirteen

Estella and Dolores

A "DARK NIGHTS" TALE
BY THOMAS BURKE



She was a very pretty girl, alone at a public meeting and in distress. Hugo Floom was only too happy to help her.

THAT part of Bayswater which calls itself North Kensington, just before it goes west (in two senses) and loses itself in the bleak but crowded mist of Notting Dale, has many recesses and labyrinths unguessed by those who use only the main roads.

Those streets and terraces and arbors are mainly lined with large houses in the stucco of the Regency, though here and there are little lanes of cottages of an earlier date, some with an aspect that candor could only call benteel, others as rakishly down-at-heel as the illustrated papers in a dentist's waiting-room.

Hugo Floom, the white-haired exp-professor of philosophy and habitual noctambulist, often pursued his hobby of night-wandering in this quarter, sometimes finishing in the last uncharted reaches of Harrow Road and sometimes amid the wastes of Wormwood Scrubs.

On a certain dark, damp night, he had been wandering in that triangle made by Westbourne Grove, Lad-broke Grove and the canal, and had passed through a street of neat shops and branch banks and estate offices, and had made two turns from it, and found himself in one of the little lanes. It was one of the shabbier sort, and about its middle was some kind of hall—a parish hall or mission hall—where a disturbed meeting seemed to be going on. Floom at once went towards it. A meeting always attracted him, since it often helped him in his study of the complicated life of the metropolis by throwing light on the doings of his fellow creatures.

When he entered the hall he found a company of about twenty or thirty. With the exception of two girls and a gaunt man with a black beard, who seemed, like himself, to have "looked in," they appeared to be rowdies from the street. Their purpose seemed to be to break up the meeting: there was stamping of boots, whistles, cat-calls, and song choruses. The little platform held one man, who was trying to conduct the meeting, and in the front row a thick-set man was finishing a speech. Floom caught

only the last few words and tried to calculate how many times in his life he had heard that identical peroration:

"... and so, friends—go forward—stand together—forces of our opponents powerless against right and unity. The dawn—the battle—our goal..."

The rest was unheard through the stamps and howls of the audience. The speaker sat down, and after a moment got up and went into an ante-room just by the platform. Floom moved down the hall amid the uproar and took a seat in the third row of chairs next to one of the girls—a pale girl with black hair in braids about her ears. As he sat down he noted, just below the uproar, a continuous buzzing and intermittent thudding from the ante-room.

The chairman, a lean young man with sharp face and too-open eyes, was making feeble protests when the man with the black beard who was sitting in front of Floom next to a demure and petite blonde stood up and lifted a large hand and a thin voice: "Mr. Chairman. A thought!"

AT sight of this the chairman wagged his head wearily and his murmur, in a Notting Dale voice, could be heard where Floom was sitting: "Strewth, not again?" Some sort of signal passed from him to the blonde girl, and Floom noticed that she acknowledged it with a nod. The bearded man went on: "A thought. May we not compare your movement to a river?"

A fruity voice from behind yelled: "Why should we, mate?"

The bearded man ignored the voice. "Just as the river receives tributaries and is linked with other rivers by canals, so you—"

The chairman rose. Apparently he had not had many lessons in public speaking or voice production. "I don't think our friend's quite got the 'ang of the subjack and purpose of our meeting."

The fruity voice broke in. "No—nor nobody else neither. I bin listening half an hour, and damn-all I can make out of what you're here for. What are ver for?"

His comrades supported him with stamping feet and a roared chorus: "Yerce—what are ver for?"

"Our purpose," said the chairman, consulting a slip of paper, "is—er—co-ordination and direction."

"Yerce, but where to?" The rest joined in. "That's right—where to?"

"It's reely the abstrack we're dealing with."

"I should damn well think so. And what is the abstrack?" The crowd again joined in. "Yerce, what is the abstrack? We'd like to know. Is it in the zoo?"

"It's a kind of—ah. But come now—order! The lady in the third row has something to say."

The girl next to Floom stood up, and he noted that her face had a graceful contour but was spoiled by somewhat hard eyes and mouth. She was greeted with ignoble comments and crude noises. She ignored them. She took up some point made by the speaker whose peroration he had heard, and she quoted Kelvin on dynamics, Woodberry on Emerson, Petrie on Egypt, Galton on eugenics, Sharp on folk songs and Carlyle on Frederick the Great.

From this Floom deduced that she had been reading herself to sleep with the volume—"DYN-FRE"—of some encyclopaedia; which perhaps accounted for the hard eyes and mouth. As she finished the chairman made the kind of signal he had made to the other girl, and as she sat down she gave a quick nod. At the same moment a square-jawed young man, in a very Mayfair suit and Mayfair hairdressing, came from the ante-room and sat in the front row, near its door.

The chairman congratulated the girl on what he called her real peach of a speech, which brought a volley of stamps and meows from the audience, and then called upon the Mayfair young man.

The Mayfair man spoke for some minutes, through whistles and yells, and his speech seemed to Floom strangely reminiscent of three articles in that morning's *Daily Messenger* on the need for a national theatre, on the need for a vigorous agricultural policy, and on the waste of money in social services. Floom was not dismayed; he had heard speeches like these at far more august functions.

The moment the Mayfair man sat down the bearded man was again on his feet. "Mr. Chairman, a thought!" The chairman put his face in his hands and murmured: "Ow long, O Lord, 'ow long?"

"A thought," the bearded man said again. "Could we not say that life is like a theatre?"

The fruity voice assured him: "Yerce, we could not."

• NOTE.—All characters and incidents in this story are imaginary and if any name used be that of a living person, such use is due to inadvertence and is not intended to refer to such person.

"There are seats for all of us in our degree."

"Why not take one, and keep it?"

"We could carry the figure farther—"

"And we will if yuh don't sit down. It's only 'alf a mile to the canal."

"One might say—"

Floom lost the rest of it. His attention was distracted by the sight of a little white patch on his knee. He saw that it was a folded note. He opened it, and found a pencil scrawl. "I am in great danger. Will you help me? If so, go out. I will follow." He turned to the girl at his side, and a faint movement of her mouth told him that it was from her.

He nodded, and inwardly rejoiced. Here was adventure of some sort, if only of gallantry. So, after allowing a minute's interval, in case their glances had been noted he got up with an air of bored detachment, and went slowly and casually to the door, and into the narrow street.

He turned and walked a few paces from the hall, and waited. Within two minutes he heard a light step behind him. He turned and raised his hat. "And in what way, young lady, can I be of service?" As he turned, he saw the bearded man come from the hall with the little blonde girl, and accompany her, with a more than fatherly air, towards the other end of the street.

"You could be the means of saving my life," the dark girl said. "That is, if you think it worth saving."

"Beauty is so scarce that it's always worth saving."

"Perhaps if you knew all— But there, you look so kind and venerable that I'm sure you would not only give help but pardon as well."

"It is scarcely for one human creature to pardon another. We're all in need of it. But you speak of saving your life. Surely you're not in that kind of danger—in the middle of modern London?"

"I assure you I am."

"But how? Who's threatening you?"

SHE lifted a slender arm from under her cloak and pointed down the street with the precision of one aiming a revolver. She pointed to the other couple who were walking slowly away. "That man!"

Floom frowned. "That man? That woolly-minded old fuss-pot? Surely you're not— Surely he couldn't."

"Ah, you judge by appearances. So, at one time, did I. It's part of the disguise under which he does his dreadful work. Nobody thinks him capable of anything—except losing trains or forgetting his latch-key. And yet, actually, he's capable of such things—and has done such things—that I could hardly mention them."

"Such things as what?" Floom, whose mind had some odd corners, hoped she would mention them; in the odd corners were fluttering certain scarlet images of palaces in the mountains of Cathay and of dens in the Baghdad of Haroun-al-Raschid.

She did mention them. As they stood in the dreaming mist of that everyday London by-street she told

him a tale that made him see the bearded man, whom he had thought an old woman, as something devilish; the more devilish because of his ordinary appearance and fussy behavior. Devilry from a devilish man is never so dreadful as devilry from a sleek and respectable citizen. He listened with horrified attention, and then asked: "And what do you want me to do?"

"Help me to escape."

"But where could I take you?"

"I don't want you to take me anywhere." (He had a moment's disappointment.) "I want you to help



me in another way. For two years, since I first trusted myself to him, I've suffered so much that I reached the point of not caring. But today I made a resolution, and tonight, with your help, I'm going where he'll never find me. Don't ask me where. I have a friend who's going there, and is willing to take me, and it's a place that not even that man would think of. He'd think of Paris, or America, or the Mediterranean, but not this place. But there's no time to lose. See, he's looking this way."

Floom turned and saw the man and the blonde girl with heads bent in their direction. "If he suspected anything, and overtook me, he'd—he'd kill me. I know too much for him to let me live away from him. You will help, won't you?"

Floom was emphatic. "In any way I can."

"Thank you. Then what I want you to do is to keep him engaged in some way until eleven. After that, I shall be gone. Keep close to him and keep him away from railway stations. That's all. At eleven o'clock you can drop him and go home. And you will know that you've been of great service to one who'll never forget it."

Before she had spoken her last

words, Floom broke in. "You can count on me, young lady. I've sometimes been called the biggest bore in London."

"Surely not. With your distinguished—"

"Yes. It's been said that once I start talking, nobody can escape me. I'll see to it that that man doesn't."

The girl took his hand and pressed it. "God bless you."

He waved divine grace aside. "Oh, not at all. To be able to help so charming a lady, to get you away from that beast, will be its own reward. But may I not know whom I'm helping?"

"Better not. Remember only that you've saved the life of—well, my Christian name is Estella. And now—thank you again and good-night." And with a quick, sad smile she was gone.

AS he turned to take up his duty, he saw the blonde girl had disappeared, and that the bearded man was just turning the corner of the street. He hurried after him, turned the corner, and found that instead of, as he imagined, wishing to avoid him, the man appeared to be waiting for him. The thin voice greeted him: "Good evening, sir. An interesting meeting, don't you think?"

Floom nodded. "Interesting in a way. But scarcely conclusive."

"Meetings seldom are. Which way are you going?" The man looked intently at him, and then up and down the street.

"Any way suits me," Floom said and moved closer to him.

"Indeed? Excellent. Then let us stroll to the main road. I thought that young girl made a profound little talk."

Who? Es—Oh, the dark girl. Yes, but a little confused."

"The female mind often is. But stay, a thought! Here's a quiet little public-house. I don't know whether you ever—"

"I do. As professor of philosophy I find that truth may as often be found at the bottom of a tankard as at the bottom of—"

"As a professor of—?"

"Philosophy."

The bearded man gave a short laugh. "Indeed! But, of course, now that I look, I see that you have, if I may be personal, something of that air. It sits well on you. But let us go in."

The bar into which he led Floom was neither little nor quiet. It was large and full, and so modern in decoration that Floom looked round in apprehension that at any moment he might be assaulted by the braying of a dance band. They sat down by a fireplace that had on its shelf one of those magnificent gilt and marble presentation clocks which, like all magnificent presentation clocks, wherever you find them, was out of order. By some means the bearded man got Floom to the wall seat of the table, and wedged it against him, and himself sat with his back to the door. Then, as soon as their drinks were served, he leaned across the table, and the black beard began wagging under Floom's nose. He spoke in a murmur.

"Sir—or professor of philosophy as you style yourself—I know that I'm placing myself in grave danger with you. But as a citizen, I put duty before personal safety. You may be able to damage me, and other people in this place. But whatever happens to me, you will never deliver those papers."

"Papers?" Floom's brow lifted in surprise, and fell in a frown. "What on earth are you talking about?"

"About you, sir. Ha! You thought yourself safe. But, alas, you've been given away."

"Given away? Me? Are you mad, sir? Or drunk?"

"Neither, sir. Acting on what I know of you, I brought you here because I could not see a policeman in the street, and you might have got away from me. You can't get away from here. There are plenty of men who would stop you. But I don't, if possible, want to be mixed up in any ugly, public brawl. So it will be sufficient if you thrust those papers into that fire there, unopened."

"I haven't the least idea what you're referring to."

"It's useless to bluff, sir. When I say papers I mean that sealed packet of instructions which you're carrying to headquarters."

"Headquarters of what?"

"The IRA, of course."

Floom laughed, and the bearded man glared. "It's no laughing matter, sir."

"Madness never is. And certainly you're mad. But from what I've heard of your life I don't wonder."

"My life, sir? And what should you know of my life?"

"I know a great deal."

"There is nothing in my life that can interest anybody. But Dolores has told me all about yours."

"Dolores? Who on earth is Dolores?"

"You affect ignorance and surprise very well, sir. But I suppose in your nefarious and shifty life it's necessary. But it gets nowhere with me. No, sir. Dolores is tired of the life of conspiracy, and after handing you those papers, she told me the story. It was a clever idea to make a rendezvous at a public meeting. It was not so clever of your chiefs to use a female as an emissary. They're so uncertain."

FLOOM put a flat hand on the table. "Listen to me, sir. I don't know what you're talking about, or why you invented this fantastic story about Dolores and sealed papers and IRA. I suppose you have some object of your own. But I have nothing to do with any Dolores or any sealed papers. Perhaps you will tell me what description you've invented for this Dolores?"

"I invented nothing sir. She told me her name was Dolores. I mean the girl who sat next me in the hall."

Floom laughed again. "I never saw her before this evening. Your whole story is preposterous — a cover, I suppose, to your fears for yourself. You can make no charge against me to the police. But I can make one or two about you."

"About me? How dare you! But there, it's a common trick of the cornered man to accuse his accusers. I am certain you have those papers on you. I saw you, in the hall, out of the corner of my eye, put a paper in your pocket."

"You did, sir. It was an appeal for help against a villain. Against you, sir."

"Bluffing again? But I know more than you think. I know your address. I know where you're hoping to go with those papers. Dolores told me all your story."

"And I, sir, have your story—and a foul story it is—from Estella."

"Who?"

"Now who's bluffing? From Estella."

"I know no person of that name."

"The girl I sat next to in the hall. But she's out of your clutches now. You'll never see her again."

"I never saw her in my life till this evening. I have no female acquaintance at all."

"Really, sir. In face of what I know, you sit there and tell me that lie?"

"And you, in face of what I know, tell me you are not in league with the young person Dolores?"

For two or three seconds they sat and glared at each other. Then Floom, noting the dithering anger of the bearded man, began to doubt. And the bearded man, noting Floom's flushed face and dignified resentment, also began to doubt. They held each other's eyes.

THEN, simultaneously, they broke into speech, with a duet of "Do you swear, sir—?" They stopped, and began again, like two people trying to make way for each other in the street and making the same movement. "Do you sw—"

Then Floom said: "Pardon. Pray go on."

"I ask you," the other said, "do you swear that you carry no treasonous papers?"

Floom met him eye to eye and said: "I swear it. I would, in another place, permit myself to be searched. I swear also that I have never till this evening seen or heard of the girl called Dolores."

The bearded man wagged his beard. "Sir, I believe you. And in my turn I swear that I have never till this evening seen or heard of that young person who made the speech. And that my quiet and uninteresting life is open to any inspection."

They looked blankly at each other. Then Floom said: "I think we might as well drink our beer." They did. "But assuming we're both telling the truth, why should those girls have —?"

Up went the hand. "A thought! Things are not always what they seem. I believe that meeting was packed. They wanted to get rid of us so as to carry some resolution without dissent."

"It didn't sound like it."

"No. But the other intruders didn't matter. They were merely rowdies. We were the only two who represented what could have been intelligent opposition."

Floom gave a sad smile. "What kind of opposition?"

"I begin to suspect something more than a packed meeting. Let us go back to that hall. At once."

They got up and went out. They hurried back the way they had come. As they reached the little street where the hall stood the bearded man said: "Ha! Look!" A large touring car was just moving away. At the wheel Floom saw the sharp-faced chairman and next him the sleek-haired Mayfair boy. Behind, he saw the dark braids of "Estella" and the blonde head of "Dolores."

As it moved away "Estella" looked over the back. She waved to Floom. "Thanks, darling, for keeping old Whiskers out of the way. Bye-bye." The blonde girl leaned out and cried to the bearded man: "Thanks, Landru, for looking after old Snowball."

THE car shot away into the mist, and they stood looking after it. Then the bearded man raised a hand, but before he could say anything Floom broke in.

"Sir, if you're going to have another thought I shall feel inclined to kill you. It's quite clear that we've been used. Used against each other to cover some nefarious doings. I don't feel that we need have any thoughts about it."

"No. But what have they been doing? We ought to find out. A thought comes to me—I can't help it. Those noises going on in the ante-room — that stamping of feet and uproar which the chairman did not attempt to check, because it drowned other noises. That meeting wasn't a meeting. The speakers were confederates, and those rowdies, I feel sure, were hired. Let us go inside."

The hall was still lit, but empty. They went through it to the ante-room and there they saw two or three picks and drills. They saw also a pile of bricks and plaster and dust, and in the wall a large gaping hole leading into the building that backed on to the hall.

The bearded man looked at it. "Now, what building backs on to this place? Ha! I remember, a branch of the Plutonian Bank. Dear, dear. If we'd only been a little more alert, if only I'd had a thought about those noises, we might have prevented a bank robbery."

Floom looked sour. He was thinking that here was another little adventure that would not bear telling. "Who cares? No bank's ever done anything for me. But being made a fool of . . . Still, a nice girl, that Estella. Such a vivid imagination in fastening her story on to—" He looked the bearded man up and down. "—you. A pleasant companion for a little dinner, I should think. And I shall never—"

"So," said the bearded man, "was Dolores. In spite of her ridiculous slander in turning you into a desperado. We might say, don't you think, that life is like an ocean. Ships that pass in the—"

"Oh, shut up!"

THE END ★ ★

Dark at the Inn

BY JAMES POLLING

She couldn't remember exactly where it was,
but she could never forget what happened there.

THE Saturday afternoon crowds had thinned, but the stragglers were all hurrying and the air of the big station was still scurry, bustle and more scurry.

Inside the information booth three tired men looked at each other with relief. For the first time in several hours they were free from a pelting rain of questions.

None of them noticed the woman until she was speaking, asking in a thin, shrill voice: "What trains go to Buck Hills—Buck Hills in the Catskills? I think it's on the New York Central. I want to find out what trains go there."

Her umbrella, you could tell at a glance, was as much a protection against emergencies as it was against rain. Across her ample hips an indescribably brown coat was tightly drawn, the upper buttons open to the faded glory of a paisley scarf. Her hat sat upon her head to crown it, to add dignity and to tell the world that she was dressed for a purpose and was on very definite business.

"No," said the tallest of the three men, handing her a timetable. "Buck Hills is on the Lackawana."

SHE took the timetable and walked off. Fifty feet away she stopped and stared questioningly into space, then returned.

"Is there an inn at Buck Hills call the *Green Tree Inn*? Do you have a book with the names of hotels? How can I find out the names of places to stay?"

"Just a minute, madam. Let's see now." The tall man pulled his register of hotels from under the counter.

"I think it's called the *Green Tree*," she said. "There are some other hotels up there, too. If it isn't in Buck Hills, it's in Walpole or one of those other places near there."

"There's nothing by that name in Buck Hills."

"See what's in Walpole. Is there a station at Walpole?"

"No, ma'am. You have to take a bus or taxi to Walpole. It's about five miles from Buck Hills."

"Five miles. That's the place. What kind of hotel is there in Walpole? Is there a *Green Tree Inn* there?"

"Just a minute, ma'am. Yes, here it is. See?"

"The *Green Tree Inn*. Walpole. And you get off the train at Buck Hills. Yes, that's it. I haven't

been there in forty years. Thank you, young man."

* * *

No, she hadn't been there for forty years.

She had gone with Charles, one afternoon in early summer.

When they arrived she had asked: "Where are we going now? I don't see any picnic places here."

"There's a grand spot, Madge, a little way up the road. It's a lovely spot. You'll like it, I'm sure."

"But it seems such a long way. Are you sure it isn't too far, Charles? We've got to take an early train home. I promised mother we'd be back before dark. How far is it?"

"I'll hire a buggy. It's about four miles."

"Four miles! Gracious, Charles, whatever made you pick a spot like that? There must be lots of nearer picnic spots. Here we've taken a train for thirty miles and we're still not there."

"I know, Madge, but wait till you see it. I've wanted you to see it ever since I discovered it."

"I only hope it's worth it. And we absolutely must get home before dark, Charles. Mother will worry herself sick. She didn't dare tell father she was letting me come all the way up here unchaperoned. I promised I'd be back before dark. How far away from where we are going does your cousin live?"

"About a mile. Come, let's hurry."

The buggy ride, and then the lovely spot. And it was lovely. The river stretched out below, a wide silver ribbon strewn by some careless hand through the centre of a wandering valley. From their neighborly little green hill, pleasantly dotted with warm grey rocks, the great sweep of the view dusted everything to the horizon with a careless, lush beauty. It was lovely, even though overhead the clouds silently gathered.

"It's beautiful, Charles, beautiful."

"I hoped you'd like it."

"But, Charles, look at those clouds. Doesn't it look like rain?"

"No dear, I don't think so."

So they sat on the rocks, lost in themselves, until the rain was upon them. Then Charles threw his coat over Madge's light dress and they ran to a tree for shelter.

"You'll catch your death of cold."

"No. I won't. Don't you worry about me."

"Why did the rain have to come and spoil everything, Charles? It was so lovely. But we mustn't forget the time. There's only one train, you

said. We've got to get home on time. I don't know what father would do."

"Don't worry. We'll manage, Madge. Perhaps it will clear soon."

But it didn't clear. It rained harder and eventually, in the valley, the one train came into sight for a brief moment and then disappeared behind the curtain of the rain.

"I guess we'll have to stay at my cousin's, Madge."

"Your cousin's . . . Oh, Charles! Father and mother will never forgive me! How can I ever explain? I don't know what to do. I'm frightened."

They trudged through the rain. "It's less than a mile, dear. We'll soon be there."

Silently, they walked on, and the rain and tears mingled on her cheeks.

"There it is. See the sign, Madge?"

She read the sign—*Green Tree Inn*—and said: "Your cousin's farm . . . The rest of the words died in her throat and she was still silent when someone showed her a room and someone built her a fire.

"You'd better dry your feet, Miss," somebody said. Dusk spread across the room and the daylight was inched back into the fireplace until only the flickering flames were left.

"Here's your dinner, Miss," somebody said, setting a tray of food in front of her.

"Why, you didn't touch a thing," somebody said, taking the tray away.

There was a knock on the door and a voice said: "Goodnight." Then the fire died to embers and the room grew big with darkness and she crept into a strange bed.

She knew she hadn't slept. She knew she wasn't dreaming and she knew she had to scream. Someone was in the room. Somebody was leaning over the bed. The scream stuck in her throat. She wanted to free it, desperately needed to free it, but couldn't.

"Madge! Madge, dear."

The scream wouldn't be dislodged. It was in her throat and strangling her and Charles was kissing her. Charles was on the bed kissing her. "My darling," he said, and he grew heavy on the bed as she lay there in her paralysis of fear.

Forty years ago. For forty years they had been married. Charles had loved her and now Charles was dead. Her father had never forgiven her, and her mother had sickened of the shock and shame. Just a hotel—the *Green Tree Inn*—not his cousin's house. Just a public hotel. But Charles had been good to her for forty years.

"I planned to miss that train," he told her just before he died. "Probably did wrong, but I've always loved you, Madge. Why couldn't you love me?"

After forty years, the scream was still in her throat.

She'd go to that lovely spot, she'd go to the *Green Tree Inn*. And when she got there, when the fire died down and all was dark at the inn, she would scream and scream and scream until her breath gave out. Until she was free.

THE END * *

The River

BY ROBERT EASTON

Every man has to cross a river some day. On the other side he learns what kind of man he is.

THE wall map behind the colonel's desk was covered by acetate on which two opposing lines were drawn in red and blue, with a dark crooked line between that was the river.

While the colonel was speaking Dean's eyes followed the crooked line. He compared it to the lines of other rivers he had seen on other maps throughout the world and could find it no different.

And he imagined the river as it wound tonight through its depression across the frozen plain, such a gentle old river, following quietly between low banks, down past the ruined villages, by the silent fields and woods, too old a stream to sing. Why, it really was no river at all, but a large creek. And it had a gravel bottom and fish lived in it and ducks paddled its backwaters; fox and muskrat tracked along its banks, and farmers in the rainy season speculated as to whether it would rise or fall, as farmers did the world over. So why, among all rivers on the face of the earth, was this one especially notable?

Dean decided it was because several hundred thousand men, represented by the red and blue lines, were drawn up along the banks of this river waiting to kill one another; and because not one of them had been across.

"The patrol," Colonel Starbuckle was saying, tapping the words out with his swagger stick, "will consist of an officer and three men. It will cross here"—he indicated a spot on the wall map—"where our photographs show the log across the stream, proceeding from there almost directly east, and if possible continuing to the open ground beyond. Intelligence anticipates mines there. Remember: The primary mission of this patrol is to take a prisoner! We must have information! And now"—Colonel Starbuckle tilted back in his chair, surveying his subordinates—"any questions, Major?"

Colonel Starbuckle was the old soldier in the new army. From the brush of his grey hair to his gleaming boots he had not changed a point in thirty years. The worn service ribbons from the last war and a mood of continuing displeasure were the barriers he interposed between his old world and the new.

Dean picked out among those ribbons the red, white and blue of the Silver Star and wondered what finger on what map so long ago had shown young Starbuckle the place he was to cross the river—he personally, Alexander Starbuckle, a likely youngster used to soda pop and baseball, come six thousand miles from home to go sneaking around in the dark of a strange country, to meet

some other youngster face to face, whom he did not want to meet and had no particular animosity toward. And Dean wondered just exactly what had happened between those two men, because he, John Dean, never had been across any rivers in his life before, except on pleasure.

"Well, sir?" The rap of Starbuckle's stick reminded Dean he was owing an answer.

"I'd like to take that patrol myself, sir."

Starbuckle looked at him. "What for?"

"Oh, I don't know. I'd just like to go along."

Starbuckle fixed Dean suddenly with the end of his stick. "What do you mean you 'don't know'? Don't tell me you don't know! You know as well as I do why you want to cross that river, Dean—just to show yourself you can! Why, you make me sick! You're no better than a boy daring himself to jump down from the alley fence, and I dare say you're forty years old! Now listen to me"—the stick which had spitted Dean held him up level with Starbuckle's grey eyes—"you're a battalion commander, not a patrol leader. In an Army there is no place for the impulses of the individual, because they tend to be illogical—like yours. In the over-all, they fail!" Starbuckle's stick descended with finality upon his desk. "Major, when the Army wants its battalion commanders to become patrol leaders I'll let you know!"

"Yes, sir."

"Are there any questions?" Starbuckle asked.

"No questions, sir."

Dean went out into the winter night, got into his jeep and drove quickly away, tyres crunching on the frozen road. He felt a snowflake strike him in the face, then another, then many more; and he was glad of this, because he would be crossing the river tonight and the snow would hide him.

DOG COMPANY'S sector was the ruined village of Balder; its command post a cellar at the edge of town.

The light of a single lamp, which stood on a table among a tangle of field telephones, shone ruddy on the vaulted brick and on the ring of faces at the stove, while other shadowy faces peered into the circle of lamp-light from the outer darkness, and still more lay asleep beyond.

"Evening, Major," the young captain greeted Dean, and added: "We'd about given you up."

"Given me up?" exclaimed Dean, moving in nearer the stove and rubbing the frost out of his fingers. "Why so?"

"Well, the weather being what it is, and all—"

"Just the right kind of weather," said Dean, a shade belligerently, aware of the eyes upon him. "Fresh snow's the best thing we could have. Where are those boys of mine? They ready yet?"

"Yes, sir—ready and waiting. Call Sevier, somebody!" the captain ordered, and a man left the circle, returning in a moment from the dark recesses of the cellar with a tall, spare figure swathed in white sheets, who was followed by two others similarly dressed.

"What's this, the Ku Klux Klan?" Dean's joshing was hearty, good for morale. "Hello, Sergeant Sevier. Hello, men."

"Figured we'd better get it while we could," grinned the long sergeant, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes. "Just what kind of party is this we're goin' on, Major?"

"Over the river."

"Sir, you could have talked all night and not said that!"

The crowd's approving chuckle seemed with Sevier.

The young captain asked Dean how he planned to cross the river.

"A fallen tree of some kind. Intelligence picked it up from yesterday's air photographs."

"Stout fellers, Intelligence!" observed Sevier.

WHILE he was donning the home-made camouflage suit—pieced out of the enemy's bed sheets and best linen towels, long winter underwear and a flour sack for the head—Dean continued to feel the eyes upon him, and he knew he wanted to hide something—that faintest, dampest finger of a quail, resting upon his vitals.

So he said very casually: "Can't see a hundred feet outdoors. Night's made to order for patrolling." And then he wondered if he had said too much; for his mind had leaped ahead and was down along the river looking at the frozen woods and fields and the dark and ominous water which no man knew—wondering what made it so, what set apart this place above all others. The same trees grew here. The same water ran here. Day and night rose over this bit of land as over any other. Snow and spring fell upon it. And he wondered why, among all the land adjoining clear to the ends of the earth, this plot had been so especially reserved for him.

"I'll show you the photographs," he said, as if they were the important things, and drawing the shiny prints from the folder he had brought along he pointed out the route of the patrol: the dotted line superscribed in red ink, the faint blur of the log across the stream, the clearing on the opposite bank with its surrounding trees, and the emplacements in the field beyond, each circled familiarly with red ink. How easily such things were done upon paper, thought Dean.

"Got the plan, fellows?" he asked, and when his men said they had he stuck his .45 automatic into his belt,



settled a hand grenade in each pocket, and winked at the young captain. "See you later."

"We'll have hot coffee ready for you!" the captain grinned; and Dean grinned back at him, grinned at everybody all around the room, because of all the things he felt least like doing grinning was it.

He instructed the others to follow him at intervals of fifteen yards, left the cellar and led off down the village street toward the river.

There was no sound. The patrol passed like a file of ghosts among the ruined buildings, the dead homes the snow was mercifully covering. An outpost challenged from the shadow of a wall.

Then they were embarked upon the night, the white unknown rising against them and no charts for the future but what the hours would bring.

The snow descended without wind, softly as down falling, to touch the earth with a scarcely audible caress. It clung to the tall, bare elms and made their upstretched limbs silvery, like giant candelabra. It clung to the little Christmas firs, the trees of Christ green even in winter, and covered the shell holes, trenches, gun positions, dugouts and foxholes, as if healing the earth of its scars.

Dean always had thought snow beautiful until now.

Now he fought to see beyond twenty yards; and at the limit of his vision, where the darkness advancing and receding made strange shapes and chimeras, the eyes brought to his brain a constant variety of sensations, each one demanding to be evaluated instantly, each fraught with the possibility of sudden death. Thus a row of white tree trunks could be a file of men dressed like his own patrol; or a snow-covered stump a crouching man.

LIKEWISE his hypersensitive ears brought sounds; the crunch of his feet upon the snow to be identified from that of Sevier behind; the sound of his clothing as he moved; ice popping in a limb, dripping water; a bird's cry; the nameless and unidentifiable sounds of woods upon a winter's night—all half obscured within the constant swish of falling snow.

The snowfall lightened, ceased for a moment while the sky changed and the moon shone through and made the woods as bright as day, beautiful as an engraving; and Dean, not daring to move, cursed the moonlight in the name of the Creator of all Beauty and prayed for the snow to fall again.

Odd thoughts assailed him: Starbuckle's belt buckle shining so brightly; the day he first heard of the war, the smell of the sunlight on

the porch that lazy afternoon and his eyes resting upon the newly turned garden bed, where he had set out jonquils he never would see bloom; his wife's face and a letter he had written her from England, saying so profoundly: "A man who has never been in battle is like a woman who has never had a child."

WITH these abstractions tiny demon voices were sounding in his ears, counselling him most plausibly: "Remember, the enemy has his patrols, too. Who do you think you are? Why, you're forty-two years old. You're middle-aged! Look out! Look out! Careful, there might be a mine under that next footstep! So you're crossing the river on a log, are you? Don't make me laugh! Do you think the enemy could be so stupid as to leave that log unwatched, uncovered by fire, unmined?"

Suddenly there was a sound like the splitting of a steel girder.

In a fearful quarter-second Dean reacted—lying on his belly in the snow, shame equally quick suffused him as he recognised the passage of a high-velocity shell close above his head, and heard the report of his own artillery from the hill behind the town.

The shell smashed into the trees beyond the river with a sudden red glare that heartened Dean.

He got up and was covering ground swiftly when he heard the sound for which he had been waiting—the spaced crunching of the frozen snow, gathering in rhythm, regular, unquestionably the steps of a heavy body running away.

And then for the painful seconds of decision Dean became one with all commanders, who from doubts, suspicions, half truths, rumors of fact, must derive their fateful "yes" or "no."

He felt the eyes of the men behind him reading his mind through his muscles at a distance of fifteen yards.

He heard the tiny voice of alarm: "The game's up! There's no more use. You can go back honorably and the others will bear you out. You've done all that's humanly possible. Don't be a fool!"

He walked forward like a man doomed.

Before he knew it, he had reached the river.

At his feet the black water ran silently and there was the log frosted with snow and beyond it, barely visible in winter mist and shadow, the clearing and the surrounding trees, all so exactly as he had expected them to be that Dean felt he had been this way before. His instinct for direction had led him true.

For nearly an hour he studied the log and its opposite approaches. A

ticklish spot. Dean placed himself in the enemy's position and imagined what he would do to defend such a feature in the terrain; and when he had chosen his own foxholes and machine-gun sites he marked these down into his memory and drew a map of that clearing in his mind, with the route which he must follow to avoid these dangers, and gain most quickly the protection of the opposite trees.

He started hands-and-knees across the log, found its covering of snow bothered him, changed to a straddling position, hitching forward with both hands, feet dangling, and finished the journey to the opposite bank.

Lying flat, he watched the rest of the patrol come over, their progress more rapid than his own, following the procedure he had tested and proved, then turned his attention to the clearing. Taking the map of it from his mind, he re-located the enemy's positions as they appeared in new perspective: where the machine-gun on his right would sweep, if it could see; where the fire from the left would join, and where—just in between that junction, at the farthest possible point from either gun—the route of the patrol lay.

THREE steps and his foot struck something—wire. Groping down without moving the foot, and without taking his eyes from the horizon thirty yards away, Dean's fingers told him he had stepped into a network of barbed tripping wires, ankle high.

The possibility of this barrier being mined occurred to him, but he dismissed it and moved on, raising his feet carefully above the low wires and seeing with satisfaction that his men did likewise.

Another twenty yards and again his foot struck something. This time his fingers told him of a cold, metallic object under the snow, circular—an anti-tank mine. After he had examined the first two, he no longer entertained the idea of these mines being booby-trapped, but pressed on, to discover the entire clearing laid with Teller mines, up to the edge of the trees. Dean was more concerned with the communication wire he was following—a single strand about the size of a lead pencil that must be running from the outpost on the right—than he was about the mines, or the possibility of the sudden stutter of an enemy burp gun.

He let the communication wire be his guide. It led him out of the trees into a field.

He found a path with footprint's still uncovered by the snow and followed it around the edge of the field.

He stopped as his eyes caught

movement. Something was coming up the trail. Something in the shape of a man.

Dean's heart receded from his throat; blood flooded his limbs. His mind was clear, and blank.

The figure stopped.

Dean could see snowflakes making a crown on the German's helmet and white epaulets along his shoulders and flecking and clotting upon the dark overcoat as upon the little Christmas fir. Minute after minute passed. Dean realised this man was stupefied with fear—of him, of John Dean's ghostly shape in the snow.

The thought was pleasant.

Now the man was walking away. Dean followed him. The man went faster. Dean went faster.

The man began running. So did Dean, with the wildest excitement he ever had known. His eyes stayed fixed to the shoulders of his quarry that rose and fell before him against the still gackground of the night, and grew steadily larger, larger, and larger.

Suddenly they disappeared.

Dean sprinted to gain the rise in the ground, passed over it and came to a fork in the trail. One way lay straight ahead; one turned off sharply towards the village and the enemy headquarters Dean knew lay in that direction. He stopped.

Quickly he summed up the factors: the distance to the village, his chances of overtaking his quarry before arrival there, of being ambushed on the way, the time required for an alarm to be given and a pursuit to be organised. As Sevier and the others came up to him, Dean reached his decision.

Without a word he turned and started back the way he had come, and only then did he realise he had not taken his pistol from his belt.

He had gone back nearly to where he'd started on the trail when he saw a light, a tiny bead that seemed to come from a great distance, or from very near at hand.

He waited until he felt Sevier's hand on his shoulder.

"What you got?" the sergeant whispered.

Dean showed him. Without a word they moved on, creeping now in the snow.

Within a few yards Dean could distinguish the outline of a mound beside the trail, a dugout covered with snow. He saw the black, bare ends of the logs supporting the sand-bagged roof, the scabble of branches thrown on top for camouflage, and coming from the side of the mound nearest him, the tiny light.

He crept up to it and discovered an aperture about six inches square.

PEERING carefully into this, he saw, at what appeared to be a great distance underground, some curious object he did not recognise. After several seconds the thing resolved itself into a human ear, part of the face adjoining and the hair above, all not a foot away.

Without shifting his eyes, Dean felt for Sevier and guided him into position over the hole. Sevier peered for perhaps thirty seconds before he drew back with a start.

Dean grinned. He noticed the other

two members of the patrol had quietly deployed themselves around the dugout. He indicated the entrance to Sevier, a low doorway covered with a blanket. He drew his .45 and reached it carefully down the hole. When the muzzle was an inch from the illuminated ear he said in German: "Come out!" The ear disappeared. Dean's pistol did not waver. "Come out!" he repeated more loudly. "Grenades!"

Then the blanket at the entrance to the dugout stirred. There was a rustling sound and a small figure in cap and overcoat, hands held high, protesting fearfully, emerged. "Comrade! Comrade! Yah, yah! Me comrade!"

"Shut up!" growled Sevier. He jabbed his tommy-gun into the little man's belly.

"There may be more!" Dean said.

When no more came he ducked into the hole and found a comfortable, warm room lighted by a candle on a box. Gear and bedding were strewn around the floor. The walls were partly of earth, partly logs. Many pictures of luscious blondes were pinned to the logs. On the bed beside the candle was the adventure magazine the little man had been reading. Dean noted the aperture above, a vent carelessly left open, the sort of thing they did in his own Army. But what impressed him most about the place was its sour smell, like wet wool, the distinctive body odor of his enemy.

BEING in this den of his antagonist, feeling the still-warm blankets, seeing letters from home piled by the candle, smelling that highly personal odor excited Dean more than anything that had happened that evening. When he had made a hasty examination and found nothing of military value, he left.

"What'd you find, sir?" Sevier asked.

"Some pin-up girls and a Western story," said Dean.

"How long have you been in the army?" Dean asked the prisoner in German.

"Five years."

Not far away a dog barked; then another. Sevier shifted uneasily, glanced in the direction of the sound, then at Dean. But Dean would not be hurried. He had waited for this moment too long. And there was still one thing he must know. "How old are you?"

"Forty-two."

"How did you happen to be here tonight, in particular dugout?"

"It is Hitler's fault!" the little man burst out. "All the war is because of the big Nazis. Germany never wanted war with America. I am a Social Democrat!" He explained that the whole war had been a terrible mistake, that he welcomed the Allies as liberators, that never once had he fired upon an American soldier; till suddenly Dean was overwhelmed with disgust at all that had taken him in the prime of his life and brought him here to see this miserable creature. This a man? This the image of the angels? Why, this poor creature crawling up out of its hole, crying out in fear, was no better than a worm.

He turned away.

Sevier's tommy-gun imparted the necessary information into the rump of the prisoner, and the little man followed Dean's white shape that was moving through the trees towards the river.

Dean was not surprised when he came to the clearing by the log exactly where he had left it. He saw without alarm how much the snowfall had lightened, how much the limits of his vision had increased. He almost could make out the machine-gun positions on either flank.

THE first tracer bullets did not startle him; neither did the sound, like ripping metal, of the machine-gun opening up.

The fire was coming from his right, the phosphorescent leads chasing one another like fireflies.

The metallic stutter stopped. Dean watched the last of the tracers fade away like sparks in the wind. Then they appeared again, in front of him, a continuous stream joined now by another coming from the left, to make a fiery angle with its apex twenty yards ahead. He moved steadily within this angle, measuring its progress against his own. When it reversed and started back towards him, he lay down and let the bullets pass harmlessly overhead, noting Sevier and the others doing the same.

As the firing again stopped, Dean reached the log and passed over it, scarcely giving the process thought, and from the shelter of a tree trunk on the farther bank watched his men follow, while the machine-guns again swept back and forth vainly. And then he noticed the German. Midway on the log the little figure was going out of control. It tottered. It reeled wildly; and then with arms flailing, toppled and disappeared into the river with a flat splash.

Dean drew his pistol.

He waited until the head appeared on the surface of the water downstream, then cocked the hammer. But the prisoner's struggles resolved themselves into a definite progress towards the shore, Dean's shore, and he helped the bedraggled creature over the roots and driftwood, tilted him up to drain, thumped the water and the choking out of him.

"Just bear with us a few minutes," said Dean, "and you'll be through with war for ever."

"Let's get out of here!" said Sevier, coming up.

"What's your hurry, Sarge?" Dean enjoyed the other's discomfiture. He lingered deliberately. There was something compelling about this danger he had been in so long; now he was able to leave he did not want to. And out of sheer bravado he said to Sevier: "You fellows take off any time you're ready. I'll cover you in case they try to come across." He watched the sergeant disappearing while he spoke, the others following.

Dean stood disdainfully while the machine-gun bullets ripped the water and slashed the trees, for now the Germans knew that the quarry had crossed the river.

Then the first mortar shell knocked him to the ground.

The second blossomed right under

his eyes, with a blast of flame and sound that left him grovelling for his life in the snow. He saw a fallen branch no larger than his wrist and crawled under it, pressing himself against the sharp twigs that tore his flesh without his realising. The barrage rained down, bursting in trees to right and left, filling the air with shrieking steel, enflaming the ground, lifting and smashing down the body of Dean till there was no breath left in him to utter the words he tried to say but could not. "Dear God, not me! Not me!"

The light shone ruddy on the vaulted brick. The circle of faces about the lantern turned to Dean's, caught in the expression they were wearing and merging quickly into the glad, warm look of the young captain, who had given Dean his right hand and with the other was pounding his superior officer's back in unabashed exuberance.

"You're okay, Major? You had us sweating, sir! Say, you're hit!"

"No, I got tangled in a branch." Dean put his hand to his cheek and drew down blood. "I'm afraid it won't qualify me for the Purple Heart."

"We thought you'd qualified for the Wooden Cross!" said the young captain; and everybody laughed and looked their approval upon Dean, so that he felt ridiculously well rewarded for being alive.

"Now, where's the stove? Where's that cup of coffee?" he demanded.

He joined Sevier and the others of his patrol at the stove, and, while sipping his coffee, joked with them. "You fellows should have stuck around. You missed something."

"Sir," said Sevier. "That's one time Sevier just ain't there. You can keep my share of that stuff."

"Where's the German?" Dean asked.

THE prisoner was brought forward, shuddering from cold and fear until his breath sighed over his teeth. The water that had frozen to his overcoat was beginning to thaw and drip off on to the floor in puddles. His face was the color of pale soup, and his mouth hung open and his eyes wandered vacantly until they came to the stove and the coffee-pot upon the stove, and there they stayed; while shudder after shudder wracked the little frame as if they would break it.

"The Master Race!" said the young captain.

"Whew! Smell him?" said Sevier. "Even wet they stink!"

"What's your name?" Dean asked.

"Willie."

"What do you think about the war, Willie?" Willie was so intent upon the coffee-pot he did not hear.

"Take your cap off when an officer speaks to you! Stand at attention!" snapped the captain, and saved Willie trouble by snatching the cap off.

Willie seemed not to notice.

"Ask him what outfit he's from," said the captain to one of his men who acted as interpreter.

The man did so and replied: "He says he's from the infantry."

"I know that. What infantry?"

The interpreter put the question again. "He says it's the First Company."

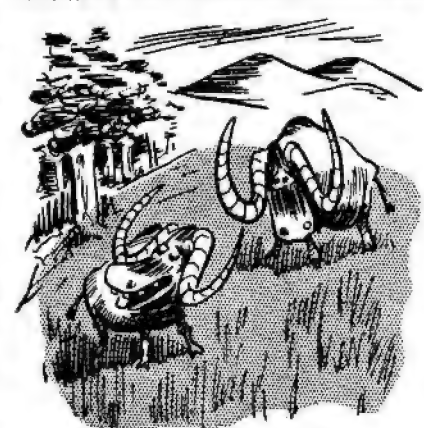
"Damn-it-to-hell!" said the captain. "Ask him the number of the Division he belonged to, and tell him he'd better give me a straight answer!"

The interpreter put the question. Willie said nothing.

"Answer the man!" roared the captain, towering above Willie, his hand drawn back for a blow.

Willie answered.

"All right," said the captain, with



"Gno! Gnever!"

a grin, "Let him have some coffee! What did you think of that news, Major?"

Dean nodded.

Willie was edging toward the stove, and Dean moved over to make room for him.

Dawn was a thin, grey line above the river when Major Dean opened the door of Colonel Starbuckle's office.

His first thought was that the colonel had not moved all night. There he sat at his desk, with the wall map behind him; even his tie was crinkled in exactly the same way as Dean had seen it seven hours before.

"Good-morning, Major."

"Good-morning, sir."

"What did you do, nick yourself shaving?"

Dean remembered the adhesive tape on his face. "No, sir, I ran into a branch in the dark."

"Shouldn't go walking around in the dark!" grunted Starbuckle. The end of his swagger-stick was switching like a nervous lion's tail. He suddenly looked right at Dean.

"Where did you cross?"

"Where you indicated, sir."

"How was it?"

"Not bad. A lot easier than I expected." Dean related what had happened, and Starbuckle heard him through without interruption.

"You took a prisoner?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where is he?"

"Back at company headquarters. He was wet from falling in the river, so I left him to change his clothes."

"You left him to change clothes!" echoed Starbuckle, as though he was thinking of something else. And then all at once he was running on in conversational tones: "Leaving

him to change clothes was a good idea, Dean. Kindness encourages them, prepares them favorably for questioning. Dirty trick, isn't it?" Starbuckle's look was shy, almost embarrassed. "Treat a man with human decency just for what you can get out of him?"

AND suddenly Dean's heart went to this old, grey soldier who had played the game so long, who had dissimulated so well, who had hidden his feelings and done his duty and won the right to wear the Silver Star. And as he looked at Starbuckle he saw again the frozen woods, the tree-stumps in the hooded shape of death, the machine-gun bullets like bright fireflies chasing one another off to nothingness; and heard the tiny voices dinning into his brain: "You can't do it! You can't cross the river!"

"I know what you mean, sir."

"That was good work tonight, Dean."

"Thank you."

"And now," said Starbuckle, his voice rising as the stick rose in his hand and indicated Dean, "now tell me this: What the devil do you mean by disobeying my direct command?"

Dean was speechless.

"Your reply, sir?" Starbuckle rapped the desk-top.

"I—I'm sorry, Colonel. I felt my duty required it."

"Oh, you felt your duty required it!" Starbuckle's face grew livid. He leaned forward and spoke as if he would sear his words into the brain of Dean forever. "Your duty, sir, is to obey orders—orders," he roared, "not inclinations!" The stick hovered before Dean's breast. "Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is this sort of thing going to happen again?"

"No, sir."

"Are there any questions, Major?"

"No, sir."

"All right, then!" said Starbuckle, smacking his stick down. He tilted half around in his chair and looked at the ceiling.

"Was that all, sir?"

"Yes."

"Good-night, Colonel."

"Good-morning, don't you mean?" snapped Starbuckle; and, as usual, Dean couldn't be quite sure whether or not the colonel were joking.

"Well, whichever," he grinned. "May it be a good one for both of us!"

Outside the day had come, one of those bright midwinter mornings that made the whole world gleam like a jewel, turned the clods of the Rhineland into crystals and the drooping telephone wires into silver threads, shone with such a promise no one could help believing winter would pass away and spring would come. For all his forty-two years Dean felt like a young man. His cheek was still smarting where the branch had torn it, and his legs and loins ached from so much unaccustomed crouching and running, but his mind was up somewhere looking down upon the kingdoms of the world.

With a chuckle over things in general, he got into his jeep and started toward the river.

THE END ★ ★

Page Twenty-one



Preview of next issue

● *Operation Sparkle* was an operation in more ways than one. It began and ended with Mrs. Winchelsea's hat. But in between it led a very dark and somewhat devious course. The setting is one of the "far-flung corners of Empire." The author, Englishman Laurence Kirk.

● Mystery-master Anthony Abbot tells of *The Perfect Case*, of a man who was so damningly incriminated as a murderer that most people thought he was as good as executed even before his trial began. The story has a remarkable climax. But its most notable feature is that it is entirely true, yet stranger than any fiction story.

● Detective writer Paul W. Fairman's character Rick Mason is almost as famous as his creator. Between them they have produced a fast-moving, exciting mystery—*The Payoff Is Murder*. You will agree that it was an inevitable payoff, though the end might leave you a little surprised.

● Never before had the doctor had a patient like Lucia come to his *Surgery Door*. His reaction was as startling as might be expected. But he was unable to diagnose Lucia's reaction. A charming if unusual love story by Margaret Langmaid.

● A certificate doesn't make a man a good ship's mate and the skipper knew it. They called him *The Old Wart*, but he knew the result of the storm and the shipwreck long before anyone else did. Author is Richard Howells Watkins.

That Fatal Charm

Like most English actors who have gone to Hollywood, Rex Harrison struck difficulties in both career and private life.

AMONG British movie heroes who, almost without exception, are singularly dreary and unhandsome, Rex Harrison stands alone—to the female eye.

Tall, languid and slim, he has a somewhat horsey face redeemed by a pair of eyes set at an extraordinary, slanting angle. They have been described by cooing female fan-writers as "wicked, knowledgeable and sophisticated."

Men aren't quite so impressed by his looks, and one reporter wrote of him: "Magnetism is something you can't buy, paint on with a brush or write into a film script. But it gets fantastic salaries for ugly mugs like Rex Harrison, Humphrey Bogart, Bill Bendix and many other unhandsome screen favorites."

When he went to Hollywood a few years ago, producers thought his long, sad face wouldn't have much appeal for American women. They covered it in his first three pictures with layers of brown paint and a beard.

But nothing could alter those eyes and Harrison got himself a new female public solely on their much-publicised magnetism. Certainly his acting had little to do with this adulation, as ever since he left England he has been determinedly prevented from displaying what acting ability he may have.

The "heavier character roles" about which he has several times boasted have involved little more than an ability to roll his eyes, talk

with an accent and have chaste affairs with various women.

For a while he seemed to forget that his greatest successes have been in those magnificent English movies *Blithe Spirit* and *The Rake's Progress*—the latter probably one of the best comedy-dramas ever made.

Harrison was born in Lancashire in 1908. Strangely enough he was christened Rex Harrison. His father was on the Stock Exchange, his mother undistinguished. He attended a couple of good, if not exclusive schools, played cricket and did most of the things a middle-class English boy should.

His original ambition was to enter his father's office as a clerk and end up on the stock exchange. But some time during his school career he lost his Lancashire accent and acquired a desire to go on the stage.

He joined the Liverpool Repertory Theatre and worked there for two years at 30/- a week. He understudied and occasionally did a walk-on part. Inevitably he went to London and spent several lean years job-hunting from theatre to theatre. He gradually worked himself into better parts and had his first real break when he appeared in *Man of Yesterday* with Leslie Banks in 1935. Another good part followed and, on the strength of it, a trip to America for a role in *Sweet Aloes*.

Back in England he signed a contract with producer Alexander Korda. He played in *French Without Tears*, *Design for Living* and *No*

Time for Comedy, among other films.

He served for two years with the RAF and was discharged a flight-lieutenant. After the war he felt an urge, like most English actors, to go to Hollywood, and lived to regret it. His first film in America was *Anna and the King of Siam*, a money-making picture in which he certainly looked pretty.

Then followed that sad flop *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, to which screen writers did horrible things when they adapted it from the delightful story first published in the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Next came *The Foxes of Harrow*, a pretentiously dreary picture.

He decided he'd had enough of these character parts and said: "I've had to convince audiences that I was in love with Irene Dunne without making love to her, make passes at Gene Tierney without touching her. I'm going back to playing characters who can just grab the girl."

At the same time his private life hit a rough patch. During his early stage career he had married a non-professional whom he divorced in favor of Austrian actress Lilli Palmer.

First hint of trouble between them came when blonde movie star Carole Landis suicided last year. Harrison was to have lunched with her the day she killed herself with an overdose of sleeping-tablets.

During the inquest some unpleasant insinuations were made about their relationship.

The talk died down after a few months, but Harrison hit the headlines again last year when his first wife won an Appeals Court judgment for £9000 alimony against him. She said he had paid her nothing for more than a year, though he was living in luxury in California.

Exploded the actor: "I'll fight this new judgment tooth and nail. I haven't the money to pay it. To hell with my film career! I'm sick of working for ex-wives, agents and governments. I couldn't even pay my 1946 taxes in full. My ex-wife can try to collect the money—if she can."

Although Harrison and Lilli Palmer have never separated, and have frequently denied any intention of doing so, it seems there must be some foundation for the innumerable cabled stories that they are not entirely happy together.

Harrison doesn't like American women much, openly disapproving of the way they run their men. "There isn't a corner they haven't invaded," he complained. "I can't even escape to the tailor's. I find when I arrive for a fitting that I must be careful not to poke my head outside my dressing-room or I shall run into a lady when I'm not completely robbed. She's come in for her suit fitting."

"I'm told American women control over half the country's wealth, and spend almost all its money. In England men would never stand for that."

Despite his troubles, Mr. Harrison is not turning his back on the warmth and comfort of the United States to

return to the cold and shortages of his native land. He has been criticised by some British film writers because of his habit in running back to America when things get a bit tough at home, but Mr. Harrison blandly announces he thinks he does the British film industry a service by making movies in Hollywood.

"If an actor does make a reputation in American films and then goes home to work with a British studio, the pictures he makes in England will earn more money for their English maker," he says with some conceit.

They won't if his American films continue at the standard of *The Foxes of Harrow*.

Personally, Harrison is a pleasant enough man, notorious among his friends for his vagueness. He is liable, absent-mindedly, to climb into someone else's slacks when he's finished taking an after-tennis shower; isn't particular whose tie he dons. Often when talking to friends, his mind wanders and he will return amiable but incorrect answers to their simplest questions because he hasn't been listening to the conversation. Vagueness is the word his publicity agents use for it. We could give it another blunter name.

To show Harrison hasn't entirely lost all traces of the Old School Tie, this anecdote received wide publicity:

He was to play the part of a tough guy named Bugsey in a radio show. He didn't have time to read the script before the rehearsal, but everything went along well until he came to the line: "King George is the English Attwater Kent." (Kent is famous for his fabulous, costly parties.)

Stretching to his full six-feet one, Harrison announced with disgust that he could never, never compare his king with a "common American millionaire."

Producers of the show hung their heads and paid tribute to his good taste.

Harrison has two children. One, by his first marriage, is seldom remembered, and the second, son of Lilli Palmer, doesn't appear to take a great part in his parents' lives either.

Harrison's last picture was *Unfaithfully Yours*, a comedy.

Since he is still on the Broadway stage, the Sydney branch of his studio, 20th Century Fox, knows of no future scheduled pictures.

THE END ★ ★

Keep free from Colds and 'Flu with BEX



The time to check a cold is at the onset. At the first suspicion of a cold don't hesitate, start taking Bex. This will usually prevent developments. If you have already allowed a cold to get a firm grip, then Bex will reduce the fever, relieve the aches and pains, and make you more comfortable. This is a simple, convenient way to treat colds that has proved its efficacy in hundreds of thousands of Australian homes.

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If fever develops

If fever develops, go to bed at once and stay there. If the fever is unduly high send for your doctor, for complications can be disastrous and dangerous unless promptly treated. In addition, and while the doctor is treating you, take Bex. Bex relieves fever as well as aches and pains.

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Mix one Bex powder with an eggcupful of honey. Dissolved slowly in the mouth this will ease any sore throat. Bex may also be dissolved in water and used as a gargle, care being taken to swallow the solution. This gives Bex a double action; it acts at the seat of the trouble and also internally.

Bex

**Powders
and
Tablets**

SOSC

THE FAITHFUL MALE

(Continued from Page 7)

I don't have to be kicked out. But I wish you'd make up your mind. A couple of nights ago you were calling me an unfaithful husband because I was never about. Now you're even kicking me out of the kitchen."

That night he picked up magazines and put them down. He wound all the clocks. He straightened the pictures. When Anne was settled in bed with a book he said: "I think I'll come to bed and read, too."

He got into his pyjamas, gathered up all the papers, made a sandwich and some coffee and got his cigarettes. Then he carried the entire load into the bedroom.

"Are you going to bed," Anne asked, "or on an expedition?"

"I'm just hungry," he said, "and I'm going to read the papers."

"I thought perhaps you were going to establish a beachhead on the bedspread."

Peter sighed. "It's no good," he said. "You accuse me of being unfaithful because I'm never at home, and when I stay home I'm in the way."

Anne didn't reply.

Peter sat at his desk the next morning looking into space. It seemed to him that he was getting nowhere. Devoted, kind and loving he was trying to be. And faithful he was. And what did he get? Nothing.

At midday Peter went to the delicatessen shop and bought potato

salad, salami sandwiches, French bread and tomato juice. He put these luncheon ingredients in his car and drove home. Anne was in the kitchen—doing the washing.

"Anne, I'm home for lunch."

Anne took her hands out of the sink. "In all the books I've read about unfaithful husbands," she said, "not once was one of them unfaithful during his lunch hour."

"Well," said Peter, "I've brought some stuff from the delicatessen. You don't have to cook my lunch. I know men who go home to lunch every day."

"I know women who have shot their husbands for less," Anne said. "I have to do the washing—then I have to clean the kitchen—and by three o'clock I've got to get dressed and be at the club. I don't have time to eat lunch."

"Will it be all right if I come home to dinner?"

"I'll have an early dinner," Anne said, "so that you can get to your meeting on time."

"I'm not going to the meeting," said Peter. "I'm spending my evening at home being faithful, devoted, loving and constant, even if it isn't appreciated."

He put the things from the delicatessen on the kitchen table and left the house. Even though Anne seemed unimpressed by his new schedule she would, he thought, in a few weeks

or less, see that he was making an effort to spend as much time with her as possible. Before long any accusation of unfaithfulness could be answered by one word: when? To that she would have no answer.

When he got home that night he walked into the front room, stopped and peered. All the lights were out, and on the table candles flickered gently. The fire threw soft flames here and there. Two cocktail glasses, containing an amber fluid, were on a coffee table before the fireplace. Frowning, Peter picked one up and tasted it. It was a Martini. He put the glass down and started for the kitchen.

He heard her voice on the telephone, and he stopped.

"No," she was saying, "I will not give a talk on that new marriage book at the club tonight, tomorrow night or any other night. . . . Well, I think the whole thing is just silly and I find I would rather trust my instincts. . . . Look, Thea—personally, I would rather have a husband who is unfaithful than have one who is in my hair twenty-four hours a day. Enough is enough of anything. . . . I know I said I would, but I'm very tired of the whole thing. . . . Goodbye." As she hung up Peter tiptoed back into the front room and yelled: "Anne!"

SHE came out of the kitchen wearing a white off-the-shoulder dress in which she was quite lovely. She walked up to him and put her arms around his neck. She gave him an unwifely kiss and then said: "You can have one Martini before dinner." She handed it to him.

Peter grinned. "Mrs. Hanford, I'm crazy about you." He kissed her and thought: wait till I tell Jack. He thinks he knows so much!

The telephone was ringing. Peter went to it and said: "Hallo!"

"This is Jack. I wonder whether Miss Campbell and I could have the day off tomorrow?"

"What for?"

"To get married," said Jack. "I got cross and put her across my knee. I gave her a darned good spanking. When I finished I asked her to marry me and she said yes." Jack chuckled. "I told you it was the thing to do."

Peter winced. "Take the day off, by all means." He hung up.

"So," he said to Anne, "you were being jealous and feminine and picking on Miss Campbell. Well, she's going to marry Jack, but he had to put her across his knee to convince her."

"Oh, pooh!" said Anne. "I knew she had her eye on Jack. I could see it the first time I saw them together. I knew that ten-pound off-the-shoulder cotton wasn't for you."

"Then what was the idea," Peter said, "of implying that it was? Come to think of it, if I had put you across my knee at the beginning of your accusations of unfaithfulness I'd have saved a lot of trouble." He picked up his drink and peered at her. "Think it would have worked?"

Anne sipped her Martini.

"You'll die wondering, darling."

THE END ★ ★

£5 for a New Title

The author, Steve McNeil, titled this story "The Faithful Male," but what would YOU call it?

PUBLISHERS of Pocket Book the Storyteller Magazine will award a prize of £5 to the reader sending in the best title. Entries must be submitted on the entry form on this page—only one entry on a form and must reach this

office not later than first mail on Monday, September 12. Winning title and name of successful entrant will be published in Pocket Book on September 24. Judges will be an editorial committee, whose decision will be final.

To The Editor,
Pocket Book,
Box 2728,
GPO, SYDNEY.

WHAT WOULD YOU CALL IT?

My title for the story which the author called "The Faithful Male" would be:—

I agree to abide by the judges' decision.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

PB. 3/9/'49

Astrology

By TOBIAS LESTER

Learn to ignore the
little disappointments

THE stars predict an irritating week for many people, a week in which the little things seem to go badly.

Always remember that life can't be roses all the way. You've had your good times and there are more good days ahead.

Those who are the victims of the quirks of fate should learn to accept

their little disappointments in a philosophical spirit and not let their irritability endanger their friendships with other people.

This advice applies especially to Geminians, for whom this can be a truly maddening week, with plans going wrong just when they appear to be succeeding.

Cancer people, too, will be out of sorts and irritable.

*
* **FOR THE PUNTER** *
* **ON** September 3, numbers *
* 5, 2, and 6, and possibly *
* 4 and 7. Colors: Purple, *
* gold, black, and green. *



SAGITTARIUS — November 24 to December 21: It's your destiny cycle, and badly aspected September 7, and afternoons of September 8 and 9.

September 3 to 6 are as good as you could expect. A destiny cycle starts new chapters. Pipe down on adverse days, but fling yourself into activity on good days. A tip: Promise little; say less.



CAPRICORN — December 22 to January 21: Adverse September 7 (to 8 pm), September 8, and afternoon of September 9.

Very good aspects September 3 to 5. This is the time for long-term planning, and when our better nature must express itself. This is a time which can bring great spiritual insight.



AQUARIUS — January 22 to February 20: Fair September 3-5; adverse September 9; unhelpful September 7-8. Quiet routine advised. If you

have some inner sanctuary it's the kind of week to visit it. All Aquarians need frequent opportunities to "go into the silence." Those who do so have never a care nor a problem, because the great Aquarian mind leads them always along the right paths.



PISCES—February 21 to March 20: Very good aspects September 3 to 5; adverse September 7-8. This is the least favorable week in your 7th cycle,

which rules partnership. Now, many of us never learn that our partner is largely what we make him or her. All partnerships need a constant search for new, richer, and better understanding. What they usually get is exactly the reverse. Try the positive, constructive approach this week. Don't overlook your own shortcomings.

Your Horoscope—September 3 - 9



ARIES — March 21 to April 21: If you're a girl, you may meet some "wolves" this week. If you're a man, you'll discover just an hour too late what you shouldn't have done an hour sooner. If you're the venturesome type you may climb just too far out on a limb. The days when you'll be out of kilter are September 7, 8, 9 and 10. But September 3 to 5 are favorable.



TAURUS — April 22 to May 21: You're right in the middle of your 5th (and 6th) cycle, and you'll be concerned with problems of love and money. Your plans may go sadly awry on September 7 and 8. Best days are September 3 to 6. If I were a Taurean I'd shut off my emotional reactions. Incidentally, if you lend money, you won't get it back.



GEMINI—May 22 to June 21: One of those maddening weeks. Yet only September 7 and 8 are adverse; September 4 and 5 are very favorable. You're in a temporary vibration (it ends September 10) which will tend to make things go wrong. Your family will probably find you irritable and hard to please. But bear up—it will all come out right.



CANCER—June 22 to July 22: You have good aspects September 3 to 6, then adverse or unhelpful September 7 to 10. You can expect some minor troubles in dealing with people. Even the ones you like best will manage to "get in your hair." You'll be out of sorts. Some of you will experience nasty stomach upsets, the reason being that there's a full moon on September 7. You'll be sure the boy-friend doesn't love you—and he may not! But next week all will be well again.



LEO—July 23 to August 23: Another "bad" week.—but bad only in small things from September 7 to 10. Take my tip: be as big as your heart is. Never forget that if you give, and expect a return, you've only made an investment—and a bad one.



VIRGO — August 24 to September 23: Most of you (even the most ardent astrological believers) will be getting the idea that you are the captain of your soul this week. September 3 to 5 will see the stars very much your way, but against you September 7 and 8. A better week follows this one, but go ahead. You may lose this week, but you must win eventually.



LIBRA — September 24 to October 23: It's nearly impossible to direct you, except in consultation with your individual chart. It's the season of upheaval. And you, like your astrological brothers, Cancer, Aries, and Capricorn, will be buffeted by the winds of destiny. The afternoons of September 7, 8 and 9 adverse.



SCORPIO—October 24 to November 23: September 3 to 6 good; September 7-8 bad in the little things. Plenty of you will be conscious of great inner power, and a conviction that you're getting somewhere. This will be exactly so. Take your disappointments as they come.

CURES THAT CONFOUND DOCTORS

*
* **IN** these days when medical science is taking giant strides in overcoming many *
* diseases, doctors are still confounded by queer cures wrought by apparent *
* superstition and black magic. Gerald Bryden-Brown discusses some of these *
* queer cures in an interesting article in this week's WORLD'S NEWS, 3d. In the *
* same issue, Carl Butler describes the growing popularity in Australia of sailplaning, *
* which some people still call gliding. WORLD'S NEWS also contains a wide variety *
* of other entertaining and informative articles, as well as the latest fiction. *

For Business Reasons

BY ROBERT CARSON

Few baby-sitters ever had a problem quite like this one.

IN West Los Angeles, at a place popularly known as the Ready Room, a bunch of girls were drinking tea and eating biscuits and waiting for worried parents to call as the shades of evening fell.

As a local service, the Students' League of the University ran a sitters' bureau, and at evening married people with both social engagements and children, and without nurses, often yelled for help.

The Ready Room, long and bare, was filled by chairs with large right arms suitable for writing or study, and run on a basis of strict seniority unless the sitter was requested by name. An urbane elderly lady, Mrs. Amelia Fish, ran the whole works from a desk that bore a telephone, smelling-salts, an old hat, a map of Westwood and vicinity, and a green morocco book with the words, "My Diary," in gilt on the cover which was full of priceless information. Pencilled largely on the wall behind her was the telephone number of the Los Angeles Police Department.

The girl with the most seniority this evening was a beautiful red-headed kid named Fay Brooks. She was eighteen years old, had big blue eyes, was a junior, and broke. While she ate peanut crunch, she read Spengler's *Decline of the West*.

The telephone rang. Everybody was alert for a moment, and then relaxed; it was a new one. Mrs. Fish asked questions and scribbled in the green book. She hung up and, frowning slightly, consulted a telephone book and the city directory.

"Fay," she said.

Closing a gloomy page of prose, Fay rose and walked over to her desk.

"Ten-sixty Los Altos Road," Mrs. Fish said. "That's only a couple of miles north of here. You can take the Fairborne Avenue bus to Sierra Blanca Road, and then you walk two streets east. Mr. Spike Harrison."

"Who?"

Mrs. Fish frowned again. "I asked him to give me his initials, but he said everyone called him Spike. He sounded cultivated—almost like a Harvard man. I think it's all right. At any rate, all you have to do is shriek very loudly and run down the middle of the road—they have a private alarm system up there."

"How many and how old?"

"One. Three."

"Gee, that's wonderful," Fay said. "No bottle to prepare, or nappies. Maybe he, she, or it will sleep the whole time. When do I go?"

"Right away—uh—Spike said."

Mrs. Fish appeared to have difficulty unscrambling her brow. "Better ring me after the people leave—otherwise I'll ask the radio cops to drift by."

"What is this?"

"Nothing, nothing," Mrs. Fish said doubtfully. "Only he said that he'd just heard of our service, and that he believed a sitter would be a big improvement over their previous practice."

"What was their previous practice?" Fay asked.

"Their previous practice, Spike said," Mrs. Fish said, "was to leave the boy alone and let him scratch on the doors and howl."

Fay was not a girl who worried particularly. Leaving the Ready Room, she bought a package of licorice and drank a milk shake at the corner milk bar, took the Fairborne Avenue bus to Sierra Blanca Road, and walked two streets east. Ten-sixty was a small, rambling, rather shaggy grey house of mixed parentage. It didn't seem sinister.

She rang the doorbell.

A tall, preoccupied, thin young man in a dinner-jacket opened the door. He had unruly hair and an essentially kind expression, but he was obviously annoyed at the interruption.

"What can I do for you?" he said.

"What can I do for you?" Fay said. "I'm the sitter from the League."

"Oh," Spike Harrison said. "Oh, of course. Come right in."

HE led her to the living-room, which was larger than the outside of the house suggested, and done charmingly with chintzes and oiled redwood and a split-brick fireplace.

"Nice of you to come by," he said.

"Sit down. Will you have a drink?"

"I don't drink."

"Is that so?" Spike absently passed a hand through his disordered hair and looked at his watch. "I'll be gone quite a while. You'll want something to read, won't you? Do you care for magazines or would..."

"I have a book with me," Fay said.

"Oh, yes. Big one, isn't it?"

"What's it called?"

"Spengler's *Decline of the West*."

"Who wrote it?" Spike asked politely.

"Spengler," Fay said. "Where's the kid?"

"Kid?" Spike said. "Oh, you mean Burdette. He's outside. I'll bring him in in a minute. Just make yourself comfortable."

Fay sat on the edge of a chair and regarded Spike narrowly. He apparently remembered something urgent and disappeared for ten

minutes, reappearing with a coat and hat on and accompanied by a large German shepherd dog. The latter licked Fay's hands and wagged his tail energetically, after which he sat down and scratched himself.

"That's Burdette," Spike said. "I hope you'll like each other. Later on you might let him out in the backyard and give him a drink of water. He's perfectly harmless—"

"Wait a minute," Fay said. "Is Burdette—"

"Yes, that's right."

"I never heard of such a thing."

"He's a strange dog," Spike said. "Hates to be alone. Loves people—everybody. I only have a daily maid, and the neighbors complained about his howling. Every one of my doors has had to be refinished. You'll be a Godsend, Miss—Miss—"

"Miss Brooks."

"If he gets restless or uneasy, throw his ball for him. He also enjoys having his ears scratched, right at the base. He'll try to coax you into letting him sit in your lap, but don't do it—he weighs eighty pounds. Good-night, Miss Brooks."

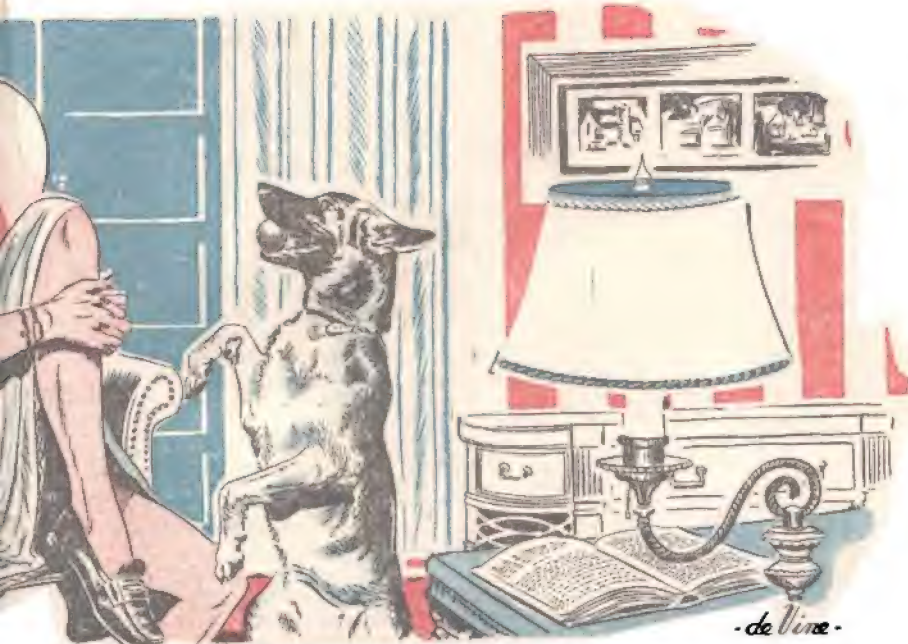
"Good-night," Fay said. "It's your money."

She read Spengler for a while. She ate licorice. Then, after the manner of all sitters, she inspected the house. It had two bedrooms tastefully arranged, a pleasant book-lined study, and a minute dining-room with French scenic paper on the walls. The maid's room at the rear of the house had been converted to an architect's workshop and was full of draughting equipment, blueprints, drawings and weighty volumes profusely illustrated. But nowhere could Fay find evidence of a feminine resident, though Mrs. Fish had distinctly mentioned "their" previous practices. Baffled, she returned to the living-room, found an apple and ate it, and dozed off.

A monotonous bouncing sound awakened her. Burdette had found his ball and was ready for a little recreation. Playing ball with him wasn't exactly fascinating. She threw it, he chased it and brought



• NOTE.—All characters and incidents in this story are imaginary and if any name used be that of a living person, such use is due to inadvertence and is not intended to refer to such person.



it back to her, and she threw it again. Yet the game never palled on Burdette. Finally she took his mind off it by letting him outside and giving him a drink of water. Then she tried successively to get Burdette to shake hands, roll over and play dead, sit up, and speak. They all came as complete and insoluble surprises to him, and no amount of explanation or examples did any good.

"Spike—Burdette, I mean," Fay said, "you're as sharp as a rowboat. Go to sleep."

A CAR rolled in the thought Spike had come home. But it was only a couple of radio cops checking, and she suddenly remembered she hadn't called Mrs. Fish. She assured the cops she was fine and exhibited her police dog companion. Burdette wanted to play ball with them. They said they'd tell Mrs. Fish it was okay.

When Spike did return, it was after one on the morning and Fay was sound asleep. She struggled dry-mouthed from her chair to discover a tall brunette with bare shoulders and a plunging neckline bending in to kiss the ecstatic Burdette on the bridge of his big nose. The brunette was very pretty, and she managed to straighten up without losing her clothing.

"I simply adore this house," she said. "And I adore Spike. And I think, after that champagne, that I even adore you, Burdette." She caught sight of Fay. "My goodness!"

"Miss Brooks," Spike said, "this—uh—"

"Miss Kramer," Miss Kramer said, and two vertical lines came between her eyebrows.

"Miss Kramer, Miss Brooks," Spike said. "Of course." He added, as an afterthought, "I'm Spike."

"I'm the sitter," Fay said, because she knew Miss Kramer would want to know. "For Sp—Burdette."

"Oh," Miss Kramer said. "Oh, what a darling idea!"

"He scratched on the doors and barked," Spike said. "When I heard

of the sitters' service at the University—"

"It's perfect," Miss Kramer said. "The cutest idea I ever heard of. Spike, you are a divine fool! Don't you just love Sp—Burdette, Miss Brooks?"

"No," Fay said, and picked up Spengler's *Decline of the West*. "I think he's a jerk. . . Is that all, Mr. Harrison?"

"Oh, no," Spike said. "I have to take Miss Kramer home, and—"

"We'll let Spike ride with us," Miss Kramer said. "I'd love having him, and we mustn't bore Miss Brooks, must we?"

"I guess not," Spike said, and looked at Fay with sudden odd concentration. He accompanied her to the door, fumbling in his pocket.

"The League will send you a bill, Mr. Harrison," Fay said. "Goodnight. I ate your apple."

"Drop in any time," Spike said. "There's plenty more where that one came from."

Fay walked two streets west to Sierra Blanca Road, and presently caught the last Fairborne Avenue bus. As she rode back to the campus, she thought of Spike, Burdette and the bare brunette. Certainly Miss Kramer should not have worn that backless and frontless gown unless Spike was in a white tie and tails, but these were strange times, and there was something about the master of ten-sixty . . . The whole episode made her feel funny.

THE following evening Fay reported to the Ready Room on schedule carrying a copy of Farbstain's *Myths of Economic Progress*, and sat and patiently ate some chocolate-coated nuts. Mrs. Fish called her over for a talk.

"You should have phoned me last night," she said. "I was worried."

"It was a dog," Fay said. "I sat with a dog. I was sort of astonished."

"Is that a fact?" Mrs. Fish said.

Fay told her the whole story, growing slightly heated at the backless, frontless conclusion. Mrs. Fish studied her inscrutably.

"Ah," she said. "Incidentally, I checked on Spike, just to be sure."

"No, Burdette," Fay said. "No, you're right. Spike."

"Up at the school," Mrs. Fish said, "they tell me Spike is the most brilliant young architect of the last two decades. He has a big office in town, and he's doing the new Exchange Bank building, drawing plans for another hotel in Beverly Hills, and putting up a dozen houses. Coining money, naturally. Unmarried, of course."

The telephone rang. "Pardon me. . . Students' League, Mrs. Fish speaking. Oh, good evening, Mr. Harrison. I have no objection whatever to calling you Spike. Miss Brooks immediately? Of course. Thank you, Spike."

"That was Spike, huh?" Fay said.

"Yes, quite a coincidence," Mrs. Fish said. "He wants you up there right away to sit with Burdette."

Once again Spike met Fay in a dinner-jacket. He seemed glad to see her, and so did Burdette. The latter already had his ball.

"Do sit down, Miss Brooks," Spike said. "My, you have big blue eyes. What's your first name?"

"Fay." "Sit down, Fay. I note you have another of those nice big books to read, and I hope you won't find Burdette too dull."

"I'm sorry I spoke harshly to Burdette last night," Fay said. "But that strip-teaser you had with you was so silly about him that I was revolted."

"She's no strip-teaser," Spike said hastily. "No, no. That's—uh—Miss Kramer. I forget her first name. Her father is the biggest contractor in town. A lovely girl, and I have to be nice to her for business reasons. I'm currently building twelve private dwellings."

"Well, anyway," Fay said. "It's none of my business."

"Tonight I'm going out with a—uh—a Miss Campbell. Her brother is a wonderful boss carpenter. I'll probably bring her by later to see my architectural drawings, and I think you'll like her better."

DURING the course of the evening Fay ate a bag of biscuits and a chocolate almond bar and played approximately eighteen innings of ball with Burdette. She came within an ace of getting him to shake hands on command, but the trick proved finally to be just out of reach of his intelligence. A sinister moodiness overtook Fay, and she thought often of Miss Kramer and Miss Campbell. Around twelve o'clock Spike turned up with a tall, rawboned blonde glittering with sequins.

"Miss Brooks," he said, "I want you to meet Miss—uh."

"How do you do, Miss Campbell," Fay said.

"You're the sitter, aren't you?" Miss Campbell said. She laughed.

"The one for Spike—Burdette, rather. What a charming idea!"

"Yeah," Fay said.

"Miss Brooks is quite a reader," Spike said, with approval. "Reads heavy stuff—stuff she can barely lift. Tonight, for instance, she has—"

"Farbstein's *Myths of Economic Progress*," Fay said.

"Who wrote that?" Miss Campbell asked. "I never heard of it."

"I don't know," Fay said. "Is that all, Mr. Harrison?"

"By no means," Spike said. "Later on I have to take Miss Campbell home, and Burdette—"

"We'll take him with us," Miss Campbell said. "Don't bother about that—I loved him. And this is a darling house, Burdette!"

"I'm Spike," Spike said. "I'll see you to the door, Fay."

As a matter of fact, he saw her clear to the hedge which divided ten-sixty from the road. They shook hands.

"It's been charming, perfectly charming," Spike said, rapidly and distractedly. "I'm crazy about that color combination of yours—red and blue. Your hair and eyes, that is. In a white dress you'd be a patriotic spectacle. In time I hope you'll grow to care for Burdette as you sit with him."

"I already feel sorry for him," Fay said. "He's a case of arrested canine development."

"We can't all be genuises," Spike said. "Pity is akin to love, I read some place. And now I must return to Miss—uh—"

"Miss Campbell," Fay said.

"Thank you," Spike said. "And now I must return to Miss Campbell. Goodnight, beautiful."

"Uh—goodnight," Fay said.

SHE expected Mrs. Fish would receive another call from Spike inside of twentyfour hours, and she was perfectly correct. They had quite a conversation before Fay was summoned to the desk.

"That was Spike," Mrs. Fish said, and raised her plucked eyebrows a few thousandths of an inch. "He said—and I believe I quote him correctly—that age cannot wither nor custom stale the infinite variety of your sitting. He wants you again tonight."

"Uh—huh," Fay said.

"In addition," Mrs. Fish said, "Spike said that you don't like his dog. He said your attitude is one of cold disapprobation. He said every other girl he has met has worshipped the very ground Burdette trots on."

"They're all playing up to him, dammit!" Fay said. "Pretending to like that four-legged Mongolian idiot so they—"

"Miss—uh—Brooks!" Mrs. Fish said.

"I beg your pardon," Fay said. "But I can't help it—it makes me so mad! He's only a lousy opportunist. All he does is go with girls who are related to people who can help him with his work. He's a low, fawning, self-seeking—"

"My dear," Mrs. Fish said. "They also serve who only sit and wait. In the words of some poet, probably Shakespeare, ours is not to question why. Get it?"

"Of course," Fay said, and proceeded to pull herself together and smile. "Anyhow, what do I care how he operates? It's nothing to me. . . I guess I've been reading too much of the *Decline of the West*, which I'm beginning to believe in."

She ate a sack of honey-encrusted popcorn on the Fairborne Avenue bus, which calmed her, and was not surprised to find the architect in white tie and tails. He gave her an apple and seated her in the living-room. Burdette gave her his ball.

"This is quite a formal affair I'm going to," Spike explained. "The opera first, and then a champagne supper afterwards. I'm taking the daughter of the president of the Board of Trade."

"I'm very happy for you," Fay said. "Burdette and I will drink to your health in a pan of water at midnight."

"Thank you," Spike said. "I'll drink both your healths in cham-



pagne at the same hour . . . I note you have your flaming hair in pigtails. It's awfully cute. Where's your big book?"

"I prefer just to think tonight," Fay said.

The hours went by. She ate a total of three apples and played two double-headers with Burdette, who had no further interest in shaking hands. At midnight they went in the kitchen, and Fay raised a glass of water ceremoniously.

"To the guy who could charm the plaster right off your ceiling," she said. "And then find some dame whose father would put it back on for you."

At ten minutes past two the unction toady appeared with a heavy brunette in what seemed to be only a few loose strands of chiffon. The heavy girl's name, which Spike had difficulty recalling, was Miss Morrowby. Miss Morrowby was amused at Fay sitting with a dog, felt the house was adorable, and happily suggested that the lovable Spike come along with them when Burdette took her home. She stated that Burdette was the most amusing male she'd ever met.

"I'm Spike," Spike said.

"But I meant Burdette," Miss Morrowby said, and threw Burdette's ball for him. "It was before that I was mixed up, darling."

"Oh," Spike said. "Oh, yes . . . Listen, the buses have stopped running, so I'll have to take Miss Brooks to Westwood. Do you mind sitting with Burdette while I do that?"

"I'd like nothing better," Miss Morrowby replied, and stared for a second at Fay.

Spike drove rapidly to the village, frowningly, and in silence. Judging that he was trying to concentrate on remembering Miss Morrowby's

name, Fay didn't speak until she had to point out where she lived in the temporary housing development, on one end of the University campus. Spike stopped the car and looked with distaste at the whole development.

"Former barracks," he said. "Why do they do these things? With the help of a little ingenuity, a bit more money, a dash of taste—"

"And the help of the father of some babe in a plunging neckline," Fay said.

"Yes, yes," Spike said. "With that, they could have light, space, functional arrangement and an exterior harmony . . . Why are you living here?"

"Because I'm the type a church-mouse would lend money to," Fay said. "Not because I like former barracks. I'm with an ex-GI, an ex-Wave and a six-month-old baby." She decided she ought to be explicit. "The Wave and the GI are married and going to college. The baby is theirs, and isn't going to college. I'm going to college and I'm a junior. I sleep on a couch."

"What's your age, height and weight?" Spike asked. "And political affiliation?"

"Eighteen," Fay said. "Five-feet-one. Seven stone four. No political affiliation as yet."

"Ah, youth, youth," Spike said. "Why, you can't even vote. Good-night, Miss Brooks." He leaned past the steering-wheel and kissed her tenderly on the mouth. "You don't know what a trial Burdette was to me until you came along. Heaven bless you, Miss Brooks. And good-night."

"Uh—goodnight," Fay said.

The next day she had a message relayed to her by Mrs. Fish; Spike wanted her to telephone him at his office. She made the call at lunch-time.

"Hello, Fay," Spike said. "I hope I didn't offend you last night."

"No, you didn't. At least, I don't feel offended now."

"That's swell. How about a date tonight?"

"You mean for sitting?"

"No, a real date. Could you wear something besides those saddle-shoes and socks and that baggy sweater?"

"I guess so—but I won't have that new, bare look."

"That's all right. How about it?"

"Gee, I hardly know what to say," Fay said, "other than okay."

"I'll come by for you at seven."

"No, I'll come up to your house. Where I live is too crowded to receive anybody."

"That's wonderful service," Spike said. "But remember you're not on salary tonight."

"I can afford a little luxury once in a while," Fay said.

AT six o'clock she ran by the Ready Room to see Mrs. Fish and give her the news. An odd excitement made her cheeks the color of her hair.

"I should make this plain," she said, "so there'll be no misunderstanding. This is a date, not a job. I'll be off duty tonight."

"I'm absolutely astonished by the

news," Mrs. Fish said. "I'll be darned . . . You like Bur—Spike, don't you?"

"All I can say at this time," Fay said, "is that when I'm around him, I feel as if I'm going to blow my top. It's not like with college boys at all. Last night he kissed me. He doesn't like where I live. Do you think I ought to wear that green dress I've been saving for the annual homecoming dance?"

"Certainly," Mrs. Fish replied. "Shoot the works, Fay. This is the year of decision."

Clad in lovely green and wearing an emerald clip once owned by her mother and balancing on French heels, Fay took the Fairborne Avenue bus to Sierra Blanca Road and walked two streets east. She felt rather happy.

SPIKE and Burdette came to the door. Spike was wearing a polo shirt, a sports coat, baggy slacks and old, scuffed leisure slippers. Burdette was wearing a leather collar. They all examined one another with wide eyes.

"You needn't have dressed up that much," Spike said. "This is going to be a quiet evening."

It was. He cooked special egg-hamburgers of his own devising, and there was no wine—only milk. The meal was topped off by gluey bakery pie and slabs of cheese. Fay ate two egg-hamburgers and had a second piece of pie.

"Do you always eat this way?" Spike asked.

Fay nodded. "I'm a growing girl." "You'll be growing in the wrong direction if you keep it up."

After dinner the three of them went in the living-room. Spike turned on the radio, slipped off his shoes and relaxed. Fay sat rigidly. Burdette, who had successfully begged meat and pie, fell asleep.

"This is just like old times," Fay said gloomily. "I should have brought Farbstein and Spengler along with me."

"Who are they?" Spike said. "Never mind," Fay said. "Listen, can't we go out somewhere?" "Who would take care of Burdette?" Spike said.

Eventually they set out for a walk, with Burdette on a leash. By then Spike's interval of digestion was over, and he talked with some animation. They got as far as the campus, and the buildings aroused his ire.

"That university - watered - down Gothic!" he said. "All they want is something ivy will grow on. Why, if they had an ounce of imagination, they could have light, air, space—"

"My feet hurt from these high heels," Fay said. "Walk slower and tell me about yourself. Leave out the part concerning the women."

Mrs. Fish practically never guessed wrong—Spike was a Harvard man. He was thirty-two years of age, a man who yearned for glass-houses on stilts or growing out of the soil, and he wanted to make his mark on his time.

"Yes, I've noticed your sycophantic manner," Fay said.

Spike stopped and looked at her queerly. "You're an odd girl. You don't think I have a darling little house, do you? And you don't like Burdette."

"I'm not exactly crazy about either of them."

"I've always said: 'Love me, love my dog,'" Spike said. "But why take a firm stand in these uncertain times? Do you mind kissing me?"

"I don't know," Fay said, and failed to resist.

There was a long pause. Burdette grew restless.

"What are you studying?" Spike said.

"Economics."

"Not home economics? You can't cook, can you?"

"Not any better than you can," Fay said.

"Well," Spike said, "the whole thing is unhealthy between us. It's structurally wrong. It's a sort of a triangle, if you include Burdette. Why are we doing this? What ironic quirk of fate brought us together? How did you happen to be a student at this college and a sitter and thus meet me?"

"Because it's cheap," Fay said, "and—to quote a joke from an earlier generation—because I'm working my way through college."

"My generation," Spike said. "That's what I mean. It's madness. I'm thirty-two and you're eighteen. We have nothing in common, and when I'm in a wheel-chair in the old folks' home you'll only be starting to worry over your hips and wear a girdle . . . No, it can never be, and I'm a fool." He bent and kissed Fay's hot forehead. "Farewell and good-night, Miss Brooks."

He then went off in the darkness, dragging Burdette with him. Fay



stared after them for a long time, in the grip of high excitement. This was like a novel, and very novel to her.

"Oh, my aching feet!" she said to herself, and took off her shoes and went the rest of the way to the housing development on her nylons.

The following day, at a milk-bar counter, she met Mrs. Fish. The latter beamed and put down her tuna-salad sandwich.

"How did it go?" she demanded. "I refer to last night. Is he pricing diamond solitaires today?"

"No," Fay said. "It's funny. He cooked the dinner. We went for a walk. He kissed me twice, once

on the forehead. He said I was too young—"

"Don't let him kid you," Mrs. Fish said. "I'm a worldly type of woman. The younger they are, the better they like 'em. This is in the bag."

"But—" Fay began.

"Furthermore," Mrs. Fish said, "I take credit for the successful progress of this romance. Once I was cognisant of the situation and you had given me a run-down on his character, I resorted to a little stratagem. It happens there is a rich lumbering family in the State of Washington by the name of Brooks. They own thousands of acres of virgin timber and they're lousy with saw-and-planing mills. So I called Burdette—Spike, rather—and told him you were the daughter of old man Brooks, the lumber king. I said it was a family tradition that the kids, male or female, had to make their own way once they were old enough. But I told him eventually you'd come into enough six-by-eight beams to cover Texas."

"Oh," Fay said.

"Quite a little idea for speeding things up, huh?" Mrs. Fish said. "All's fair in love or war, you know."

"Is that so?" Fay said.

SLIPPING from her stool, she left her double-malt unfinished and fled from the startled Mrs. Fish. On the corner of Fairborne Avenue and Wilshire Boulevard, her heart broke. She stopped walking, blinded by tears. One of the best blocking backs the college had ever had saw her and came over.

"Look, honey," he said, "I'm having a hell of a time with my general economy. If I was to hire you from the Ready Room, would you come up to the college and sit with me and seven other guys and help us get the flow of commodities straightened out?" He had another look at her. "Hey, why is your nose running?"

"I've got an allergy or something," Fay said. "Beat it."

Nothing was left in the hollow mockery of her life except the sustaining thought of revenge. Obviously the scene on the campus, with the crabbed - age - versus - youth speech, was part of Spike's loathsome come-on. Even the fatherly kiss on the forehead was an element in the master-scheme of a master opportunist who was out to get finished lumber at any cost. He would be back again by nightfall, telephoning with honeyed words, both eyes on the main chance.

Her role was merely to wait, invite his proposal, and then denounce him in the most ringing words since Lincoln's debates with Douglas.

There would be a certain pleasure in exposing the fact that she didn't have a shingle to her name and seeing him cringe. She even considered ending the interview by punching him in the nose, but rejected it as unladylike. Her conduct would be cold, scornful and entirely correct. She knew she ought to feel gratitude to Mrs. Fish because her trick had forced Spike to hoist his true colors,

but she didn't feel anything; in fact, she couldn't return to the Ready Room and face her.

Only one thing miscarried — Spike failed to call her. A whole week passed. Fay sank slowly from profound rage to acute melancholia, surmising that Mrs. Fish had informed Spike of the deception. Even this last small crumb of satisfaction was swept from her reach. She sat no longer, had little appetite for peanut crunch or almond bars, and lost two or three pounds. The ex-GI and his wife believed she was studying too hard.

A strange wave of emotion crashed over Fay on the eighth night. Without her own volition, she took the Fairborne Avenue bus to Sierra Blanca Road, got off, and walked two streets east. The harried owner of ten-sixty opened the door and gazed at her glumly. He was wearing old pants and a rumpled shirt.

"Good evening, Miss Brooks," he said. "Isn't it funny how I always remember your name and none of the others? Come in and have an apple."

"I thought you'd be in a dinner

jacket," Fay said. "Aren't you wining and dining any more?"

"I'm too low in my mind," Spike said. He gave her an apple. "I just sit home these days with Burdette. We eat egg-hamburgers."

"Where's Kramer, Campbell and Morrowby?" Fay asked.

"Who?" Spike said. "Oh, them. Who knows? Out with other architects."

Fay played ball with Burdette and munched the apple. Spike studied his feet.

"I'll take him for a walk, if you like," Fay said humbly. "No charge."

"No, thanks," Spike said. "I'm thinking of burning this joint to the ground."

"Oh, no!" Fay said. "It's a darling house!"

"Also," Spike said, "I'm considering having Spike put to sleep."

"Oh, no!" Fay said. "I couldn't stand that. I adore Spike! Anyway, you mean Burdette."

"I mean Spike," Spike said.

She began to cry — it had become so easy to do this last week. Turning pale, Spike rushed into her arms. He

kissed her with great skill and conviction.

"I'm too old for this," he said gloomily. "We might as well recognize it."

"You're not too old yet," Fay said, and was sure she was going to pieces. "Let's not think of the future. I'll take care of you — I'm young and strong. I'll be social security for you."

"Will you marry me?" Spike said. "I make that statement against my better judgment."

"Certainly," Fay said. "Of course. Immediately. My gosh, everything's settled!" She burst into fresh tears. "No, it isn't! Mrs. Fish lied to you — I'm not the right Miss Brooks. I have absolutely no virgin forests."

"I knew that all along," Spike said. "Last winter in Palm Springs I had some dates with the right Miss Brooks. She was plain and you're beautiful. You're not the same girl."

"We're not?" Fay said excitedly. "Oh, Burdette, do you realise how much I love you?"

He licked her hand and wagged his tail rapidly.

THE END ★ ★

MARTHA JEAN (Continued from Page 9)

doing, but I knew he was not helping me. Nick went back to Martha Jean, unbuttoning her coat and putting his arms under it. He held her so tight that she cried with pain.

By the time I could get to my feet, I did not know what to do next. After Nick had knocked me down, I began to realise there was nothing I could do to stop him. If The Type had helped me, it would have turned out differently. But The Type was thinking about Nick's loans and race-track tips. He stood at the door ready to leave.

When I was on both feet again, Nick stepped over and shoved me towards the door. I went flying across the room, falling against The Type. The Type opened the door and tried to push me out into the street.

I fought him off and came back inside the door.

Nick picked up Martha Jean and started for the stairway with her. She began to scratch and fight, and Nick had a hard time keeping her from hurting him. She finally succeeded in scratching his face with her fingernails, and Nick dropped her like a hot brick.

"Como!" he yelled.

Como came tumbling down the stairs.

"Put him out and lock the door, Como," Nick ordered. "Throw him out, if he won't get out."

Nick grabbed Martha Jean again. She was such a little girl, and so young, she did not have much chance with Nick. All he had to do to hold her was to lock one arm around her neck, and cover both her hands with his other one.

Como picked up the iron stove poker and came towards me. He was scared to death.

I knew he would never hit me, but I could see that he was so scared of Nick that he had to pretend to be trying to drive me out of the door. The Type had gone.

"Throw that poker down, Como," I said.

"Mr. Hal," Como said, "you'd better leave Mr. Nick alone when he's mad. There ain't no telling what

★ *Two recruits saw the* ★
★ *ocean for the first time* ★
★ *from the deck of a trans-* ★
★ *port bound for a trouble* ★
★ *zone. "Did you ever see so* ★
★ *much water in your life?"* ★
★ *marvelled the first one, as* ★
★ *he looked out of the port-* ★
★ *hole the second day out.* ★
★ *His companion observ-* ★
★ *ed: "You haven't seen* ★
★ *nuthin' yet. That's just* ★
★ *the top of it."* ★

he's liable to do when he gets good and mad at you."

"Shut up, Como," I said.

Nick picked Martha Jean up once more and carried her as far as the stairway. There he put her down quickly and ran towards me.

I tried to meet him with my fists, but he jumped up into the air and came down on top of me. My bones felt as if they were being crushed like eggshells. When I woke up, I was lying on my face on the icy pavement.

The door was locked, and all but one light downstairs had been turned off. In the rear of the room, under one light, I could see Como throw-

ing coal into the stove and trying to see through the windows to the street outside at the same time.

I crossed the street, shielding my face against the sleet and wind that raced down the street. While I waited, I called for The Type two or three times. He did not answer, and I knew he had gone. There was nobody else in the street on a night like that.

Upstairs in the room Como had opened up, Nick had taken off his coat and was trying to make Martha Jean take off hers. She ran from him, from one side of the room to the other. Nick finally gave up trying to catch her, and picked up his coat and swung it at her.

At first she tried to cover her face and head against the stinging blows of the coat, but when Nick struck her across the back with it, she fell on the floor.

All I could see was Nick bending over her and picking her up. When she was on her feet again, she got away from him. Nick swung at her with his coat, and struck the electric light bulb hanging on a cord from the ceiling. The room suddenly became as black as the night outside.

I stood shaking and trembling in the street. The stinging, whipping, cutting sleet and wind blinded my eyes, and it was hard to open them after the light in the room went out. After a while, when Como had put out the last light downstairs, I turned and walked heavily up the street.

Once I thought I heard Martha Jean scream, but when I stopped and listened in the stinging sleet, I could not hear it again. After that I did not know whether it was she or whether it was only the wind that cried against the sharp corner of the buildings.

THE END ★ ★

The Drumlin of Joe Tom

BY THOMAS H. RADDALL

It happened long ago, but still they speak of it in Nova Scotia. And only one man knew its secret.

IN our Province there is scarcely a brook where you can't pan a trace of gold, if you work at it. A queer thing, that, in a region where no man makes an easy living, and since it was first discovered men have sunk their savings and their sweat in holes all over the countryside, in hopes of fortune.

Here and there in the bush you find the grey heaps of tailings, the rotten and collapsed shaft-timbers, the red-rusted boilers and scrap, and scattered bricks and crazy wooden ruins of small crushers, or maybe only the foundation stones of the buildings and huckleberry bushes sprouting in the red mould that once was beams and planks and boards; and you say what fools men are. Fools, maybe. But gold is there. That is the devil of it, the grinning, teasing, beckoning, blood-squeezing, sweat-drinking devil of it. Pray with me that Satan, who blew these thin veins of ore into our bedrock in the first place, will suck them all back into the hot maw of the earth, out of sight and mind.

I am thinking of Joe Tom's gold mine.

It is strange to me, an old man who has for fifty-five years lived the nomad life of a Methodist minister, who has lived the past thirty on the shores of the Pacific, a continent's width from home—it is strange to come back and find myself a Rip Van Winkle, seeing new faces, new homes, new roads, new this and that in the old scenes, to find myself unknown; and yet to hear the country folk talking of gold, of a mother lode, of an Eldorado hidden in what is still the wilderness of western Nova Scotia; to find the legend of Joe Tom's mine widely spread and firmly held—and to realise that I alone know the truth—the secret, if you like.

Let me begin at the beginning, my own beginning in the little white farmhouse looking out upon Fairy Lake. That was in 1861, when old men lived who were the pioneers of that inland district. I have sat on the knee of a man who was in the Shannon's foretop when she fought the Chesapeake. Does that sound incredible? My grandfather was the John Devonshire who first ventured up the river from the coast, and cut out a farm in the lake country among the Indians.

He got along well with them, perhaps because he had to. At any rate he learned their life and language, and afterwards, when the settlements came and spread, he was the Indians' friend and counsellor in all their dealings with the whites. My father inherited those responsibilities, and I well remember the lean, proud men, the silent, brown women, the famished bright eyes of the children, drifting into our big kitchen when times were hard, and my mother feeding them beans, and corned beef and pork, and bread and molasses and such-like. I remember how much those brown people ate, and the way they went off without thanks, without words of any sort; and how they brought gifts of moose and caribou meat whenever their hunting was fortunate, and bear hams for smoking, and sacks of wild duck and geese and partridge which they dumped in a cloud of feathers on the kitchen floor, and withes strung with fat trout. They sometimes brought furs, which my father would never accept. So they traded the furs in New Kerry settlement for odds and ends of clothing, and bright trash for their women, and powder and shot for their old guns, and for rum. Mostly for rum, I'm afraid.

THEY lived in little gipsy groups, wintering in the lake country near the farms, and moving down the rivers to the coast for the spring run of smelt, and the kiack run, the salmon run, and the easy life by the clam flats. In autumn they appeared again, mysteriously, among the bright leaves of the hardwoods by the lakeside, and patched up their old bark wigwams for winter, and gathered dead limbs for fuel, piling them tent-fashion to keep them dry and clear of the snow. They buried their occasional dead in an ancient cemetery of their people across the big lake, scratching shallow graves in the gravel under the tall red pines, and to keep off intruders told how the lake was haunted by little spirits. The Scotch, and the English like my grandfather, laughed at those tales, though they respected the brown men's graves. But the New Kerry folk believed in leprechauns and such-like themselves, and called the place Fairy Lake.

Ten years before I was born, an Australian miner went home from the California diggings and found gold on his own farm. That set people all over the world scratching in their own backyards. Gold was found all over the Atlantic slope of our peninsula, in wandering meagre veins that seldom paid to mine; pro-



mises that went on and on with no fulfilment. Where the veins crossed was often a pocket of nuggets and dust, a swelling of rich ore, just enough to whet the appetite for more, for another rummage in the bush, another stripping of the vein, another shaft, another stoop, another pouring of money and sweat into the hole in the ground.

One day—it must have been in '71, for I was about ten—Joe Tom walked into our house to see father. This Joe Tom was a fine Indian. With the Maltee boys and some others, he had given up the wandering habit of his people and cleared a bit of land by the shore of Fairy Lake, not far from ours. He built a small log house, and a barn of long slabs from the sawmill at Jock's Landing, and kept a pair of work-oxen and a cow and some hens and pigs and a squaw named Lizzie. They were childless, and Lizzie had adopted a half-breed child, fruit of a lumberman's fancy for an Indian woman up the lake, a little dark girl they called Molly. Joe Tom was a good farmer as Indians go, but now and again the old free life caught hold and dragged him off into the bush alone for weeks on end. He knew the wilderness of lakes and forest in the western thumb of our province as you know the lines on your palm, and whenever Judge Carron came to hunt and fish, he hired Joe Tom for guide.

I was in the parlor busy at my schoolbooks when Joe Tom came, and he looked at me and then at my father, and said: "Demsher, I want talk by myself."

Father gave me a glance. "Never mind the boy, Joe Tom. What are you making mystery about?"

Joe Tom had never acted like that before. He was about fifty then, a tall man in a red shirt, a pair of woolly trousers all patched with different cloth, and moccasins of moosehide; and a black mane of hair swept his shoulders. He pulled a small caribou-skin pouch from the breast of his shirt and from it poured a little heap into father's hand.

"What's this?" my father said.

"Wis-ow-soo-le-a-wa," answered Joe Tom, looking at me. That is the Micmac for gold, and he thought I wouldn't understand; but I did. What

● NOTE.—All characters and incidents in this story are imaginary and if any name used be that of a living person, such use is due to inadvertence and is not intended to refer to such person.

I don't understand, even now, is how Joe Tom knew it was the stuff the white men talked about. Nobody in our part of the country had ever seen gold in the raw. But the Indians' fancy had long been caught by the talk, by the notion of something valuable lying about the woods, in the rocks and streams, that would buy all the things they'd never been able to buy, and all so simple—finders keepers, like a legacy from the old splendid gods, and waiting all this time.

"Are you sure?" my father said, staring in his hand.

"Yuh."

"Then you'd better not tell anybody else, Joe Tom."

"Yuh."

"Is there more where this came from?"

"Some."

"A lot, Joe Tom?"

"Some."

Father poured the stuff back carefully, and Joe Tom put away the pouch in his shirt.

He said no more; but it was as if he asked a question, and father knew, and was pondering the answer. My father walked over and fiddled with the big glass lamp on the parlor table, and then to the mantel, straightening the china dogs and vases, and the daguerrotype of himself and mother taken in Milltown; then he pushed his hands deep in his trouser pockets and rubbed his chin against his shoulder as if his beard itched, and stared at me under his brows, and I put my eyes down to my book, for he looked very stern.

I knew now what he was thinking. He was thinking there would be a flocking of miners and speculators and rum-sellers and other outlandish people into our quiet district if the news got around, and he hated it. That had happened already, in many places in the province.

"The sensible thing, I suppose," he said slowly, "is to show me, or Judge Carron, next time he comes from Annapolis, or somebody else you can trust, where the stuff is. Have the land measured off and staked. Then get the Government to proclaim this region a mining district, and file your claim. Then nobody can take it from you, Joe Tom."

The Indian shook his head solemnly and looked past father's shoulder. "Is bad luck, Demsher. Is bad luck show white people where is money."

I think that hurt father a bit; the Indians had always set us Devonshires a little apart from the rest of the whites. Stiffly, he said: "Then bring out the stuff, a little at a time, and I'll get Judge Carron to sell it for you. That way, no one'll suspect where it comes from. If you take that stuff into Milltown there'll be an uproar clean to Cape North." He

was silent a moment; then he burst out: "I wish to God you'd never found it, Joe Tom!"

Then began the queer transactions that went on, year after year, till the summer of '81. At intervals Joe Tom would vanish into the wilderness; and after a time, never less than a fortnight, he would sidle into our house with the little heavy pouch, looking mighty sly. Father was in the habit of sending Judge Carron a barrel of butter from time to time, and it was a simple matter to put the packet of gold in the top and nail on the head. Our bank was in the county town, down the river, Judge Carron lived at Annapolis, on the other side of the province. He took Joe Tom's gold to the bank there, and after a time the cash came by mail in the coach to Duncan's Corner, and my father passed it to Joe Tom. It might have gone on indefinitely but for two things.

One was that Joe Tom began to spend money. He started with a fine

company, knowing well how *ouk-tawich-ke* loosened the tongue. He took the stuff home and drank alone, and lay about the shack in a stupor for days at a time.

Father raged, but he couldn't do anything about it. If he stopped handling the gold for Joe Tom, the Indian would take it to someone else, and the real turmoil would begin.

The second thing was that Lizzie died in '79, and Joe Tom and Molly went to Father O'Hearne in New Kerry and were married. That caused some talk among the women on the farms. Joe Tom was nearing sixty, though you mightn't have guessed it from his looks. The girl was only seventeen, with enough white in her blood to give her a fine-drawn look and a figure. But she took marriage with Joe Tom as a matter of course, apparently, and after some thought people said it was just as well. She was too pretty to be running around loose; they remembered how she came to be

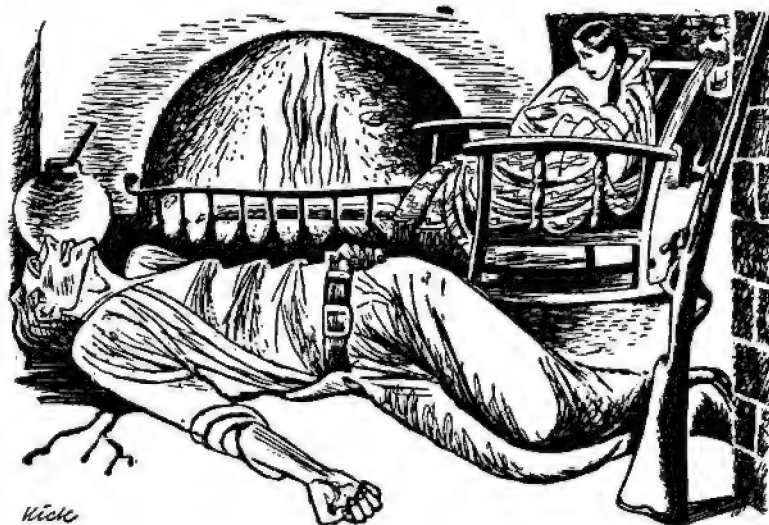
born. But things weren't quite as simple as all that. Four or five months after the marriage, Molly had a baby—a baby as white as you or me, and everybody knew it was Jim Ingle-son's.

This Jim Ingle-son was a worthless sort, about twenty-six, with curly yellow hair and blood-shot eyes and a weak, wet mouth. He'd deserted a vessel loading lumber at Milltown a few years before. I fancy his captain was glad to see the last of him; but

Jim walked the road through the woods to Duncan's Corner to make sure — forty miles, about as far as you can get from the sea in Nova Scotia—and begged and loafed from one farm to another. When the Corner got tired of him, he drifted on to the Irish at New Kerry, and from there by a natural law of gravity to the Indians at Fairy Lake. He had been around our part of the country for two years when Joe Tom's Molly gave birth to the white child. He was living then with the Maltees, a Micmac family who had a shack just a mile or two the other side of Joe Tom's.

All this was bad enough. But now we heard rumors of Joe Tom's gold, and knew that poor, easy Molly had talked as well as loved too much. The tale ran like a fire in grass. The old Indian's affluence had puzzled the countryside for years. Here was the answer, and every second man in the district was scouring stream-beds and shipping boulders and keeping an eye on Joe Tom.

About that time I went away to college. I'd done well in the country schools, and my mother was set on my going into the ministry. In



Kick

horse from Paddy Monahan, the New Kerry horse trader, and a fancy riding-waggon from the carriage factory in Milltown. Then he got a silver-mounted harness from somewhere. On fine Sundays he used to drive to Mass at New Kerry, then on to Duncan's, with a plug hat down to his ears and a claw-hammer coat over his red shirt, and Lizzie beside him in her beaded squaw-cap and a black bombazine dress all sewn with brilliants and spangles; and Molly in the seat behind, in a white-girl's outfit that made you realise she was growing up, and mighty pretty, too. That was a sight to behold.

He bought a dozen chiming clocks and set them on shelves about his shabby hut; they never kept quite the same time, and about the quarters and the hour you would hear clocks striking in succession all over the house. He got an American organ, and until she grew bored with it, the girl Molly used to sit at the thing for an hour at a time, pedalling furiously and running her brown fingers up and down the keys. He fitted out Lizzie and the girl with all kinds of gaudy jewellery, and never wore less than three watches and chains himself, and up in New Kerry he used to buy rum. He was canny about that, and would never drink in

those times every mother's ambition was to have a minister in the family—and there are worse, it seems to me. Anyway, I didn't meet Joe Tom again till the next summer holidays. That meeting I shall never forget.

It was July and thunder weather, with nothing stirring, not even the locusts. Woolly clouds piled in high mountains in the sky, grey at the edges and blue in the distance, hung over the lake and the fields and the woods, and seemed to shut in the heat like the top of an oven. We sat gasping, and waiting for the rain. It came about two o'clock in the afternoon. The thunder, after grumbling around all morning, came to a head with a crash, and a great splatter of lightning ripped down the sky, very bright against the darkness beyond the lake. Then we saw the rain coming in a dark line across the water, kicking up little red splashes in the dust of the road, then pattering, then drumming on the dry roof shingles. We couldn't see the lake for the downfall, and the road at the foot of our fields shone red like the wet clay of Fundy at low tide, and water chuckled down the gutter-spouts into the puncheons where mother caught washing-water, and our ears were full of a great hiss, like all the steam in the world. Overhead the storm rattled and boomed, and father kept looking up at the lightning-rods on the barn.

Suddenly there was a figure on the road. All the farms in our lake district sit on hillocks of deep soil—what geologists call drumlins—with swamps and woods between, like small cropped islands rising out of the forest.

This figure came out of the woods from the west, a tall man, stooped, and running hard with short, quick steps, toes in, the Indian way. As he turned in at our gate and came splashing up the steep lane that joined us to the lake road and the world, we saw it was Joe Tom. His mouth hung open, showing the black stumps of his old teeth, and the cords of his lean throat were like hard, taut wires, and his dark eyes bulged as if pushed from within. We came to our feet in a hurry and ran out into the rain, crying out to know the trouble, and as we came together in the downpour Joe Tom threw himself at my father's feet, gasping and choking and uttering little snatches of words that made no sense in English or Micmac. Father tried to get him on his feet, but he clung there to father's trouser legs, in the red mud of the lane.

"Demsher," gasped Joe Tom at last. "I killed a man. I killed Ingleson. Save me! Save me!" His voice rose to a scream on those last words, and you would have to know Indians to know the horror that filled Joe Tom.

The Indians had a great awe of the law. One or two had wandered into the county courthouse during spring or autumn sessions, and came away with solemn tales. The idea of being dragged into that echoing place, to be stared at from all sides by white men in Sunday clothes, to be droned over by strangers in black gowns, with hands full of mysterious

papers, to be faced day after day by that other stranger on the high dais, with his black gown, his immaculate white stock, and his face of an old tired eagle; and at the last to be taken out to the gaol yard, with a rope about your neck, and hauled up to a beam and left to kick your life out—this was a horror that haunted the Indian folk. I suppose the whites had rubbed in the details pretty carefully, for their own sake, in the early days. So Joe Tom, who had never feared the death that waits in so many forms for woods folk, now lay in the pelting rain and begged my father for his life.

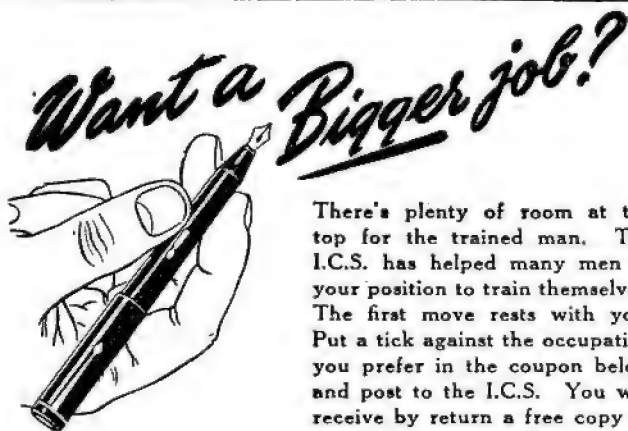
It was my mother who got Joe Tom indoors. She appeared quietly beside us and stooped, and put a hand on his shoulder. "Get up, Joe Tom!" she commanded sharply. "The idea—getting yourself all wet, at your age. Come into the house and stop all this nonsense."

We left him slumped in a chair in the kitchen, dripping water on the floor and watching mother, with the eyes of a terrified dog, as she went about her work. Father and I hitched old Darby to the buggy and whipped his surprised hide all

the way to Joe Tom's. We found Molly in a rocking-chair by the stove, rocking, rocking, rocking, with a face like white stone, and the child clasped in her arms.

Jim Ingleson was stretched on the floor, staring with dead fish-eyes at the rough board ceiling. The top of his head near the brow was hollow where it should have been round, and blood still oozed slowly through his soiled yellow curls, though his heart was as dead as his eyes. In the woodbox behind the stove stood an old muzzleloader that belonged to the Maltee boys, the stock bound with brass wire to hold an old split in the wood. Father sniffed the muzzle. It hadn't been fired, not recently, anyway. He thrust the ramrod down the barrel and found it loaded, but there was no cap on the nipple. The butt had been whittled in a deep half-moon for the shoulder, the way the Indians liked a butt to fit, and one of those sharp wooden horns was plastered with blood and hair.

The roof of the shack leaked in several places, and the drip-drip, loud in the awful silence, set my teeth on edge; but suddenly all the clocks began to chime, one after another, and the child howled.



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There were two magistrates in the district. One was Mr. Craig at Duncan's Corner, a just man but rigid, a stern unbending man. The other was Squire McGarrity. Squire McGarrity was the great man of New Kerry, that settlement of happy-go-lucky Irish, that district of ramshackle farms and fine horses and pretty girls. He was stocky and red-cheeked and white-haired, with the impish Irish humor glinting in his little blue eyes, and he was the law in New Kerry. There were many tales of his rule. One was about a fellow who got a lawyer all the way from Milltown to plead his case in the Squire's court, which was the McGarrity parlor. Nobody had ever done such a thing, and the Squire was not pleased. The Squire made a point, and the lawyer objected. "That's not the law," said the lawyer.

"Young feller," said Squire McGarrity, "I am the magistrate in New Kerry, and I make the law to suit the case. Sit down! Your client is fined five dollars, and his lawyer is warned agin contempt av this court. God save the Queen."

So father and I took Joe, Tom and Molly to Squire McGarrity, with the Maltee boys for witnesses, rattling along behind in their old buggy. My mother looked after the baby. It didn't take very long. As soon as the Squire knew what happened, he looked in my father's eyes, and you saw something passing there, the talk of good men that needs no words.

The Maltee boys deposed that Jim Ingleson had borrowed their gun to go hunting, that he had been drinking some stuff he made in a keg, and that was all they knew.

"Not by a jug-full," snorted the Squire. "But let it go. Joe Tom, what's your story?"

Joe Tom's eyes never left my father's face. Father said quietly, "Go on, Joe Tom. Tell the Squire everything."

I'll omit the slow hobbling testimony of Joe Tom, his quaint accent, his outbursts in Micmac whenever his English failed, his mixed-up tale of events that father and the Squire had to unscramble with kindly questions.

BRIEFLY, it was what you know. Poor Molly was crazy about Ingleson, and thinking to please him she'd told about Joe Tom's source of wealth. Afterwards people declared that Ingleson had seduced her with that end in mind; but the man was incapable of looking so far ahead. Jim Ingleson was too worthless even to make a good villain.

What she couldn't tell him was the location. All Molly's wiles had failed to get that from Joe Tom. So at last, with a belly-full of Dutch courage and the borrowed gun—borrowed for what purpose no one but the dead man ever knew—Ingleson went to Joe Tom's, declared the child his, and Molly's heart as well. He had come to claim both, he said. The law would back him up, he said. No Injun had the right to a half-white girl, and him old, and she

seventeen at the time; the marriage was illegal. He was glib, was Ingleson, and the words he used sounded like law in the Indian's ears. Then the loafer offered a bargain that shocked Joe Tom and Molly alike. Show him where the gold was. Show him that, and he would give up all claim to Molly and the child. He would give Joe Tom a paper to that effect. A paper. The Indians had a great respect for paper.

Did Ingleson threaten him with the gun, the Squire wanted to know.

Joe Tom answered honestly, no, he couldn't say what happened. He said his head seemed to swell. He heard himself shouting, "Kesnuk-



"If I do find a liquid which will dissolve everything, what will I put it in?"

won!" Now the word of liar in Micmac is *booskeeksooa*; but when you want to call a man a particularly vile-scoundrel-of-a-liar you say "Kesnukwon!"

At once they were struggling for the gun. Then Ingleson was lying on the floor, and Molly screaming that Joe Tom had killed her Jeem, a white man, and would suffer for it. That was all he could remember.

The Squire called on the girl to testify, but sullenly she refused, as if she knew the law; knew she wasn't forced to testify against her husband.

"Well," said Squire McGarrity, with his jaw up and his brogue coming thick, "it's a very simple case, after all. Here's a man, here's a spalpeen that gets himself dhrunk and goes out with a gun in the worst lightnin' storm we've had these ten years. There's trees struck right and left. There's Paddy Carrigan's barn burnt to the sod. There's the church hit, for all there's a lightnin'-rod on the steeple. There's Regan's struck, and quare damage, with a pot knocked to pieces on the stove and a divil a thing else. For lightnin' is quare stuff, that can whip a man's boots off, and him with no more than pins-and-needles down the leg—and on the other hand killed

John O'Dwyer in his bed, three years back, without a scorch on his nightshirt, and ould Tress beside him complainin' cuz his feet's so cold. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, and I don't see what's wrong with sayin' a man died by act o' God. But some would object. So I'll put it that Jim Ingleson met his death by misadventure near Fairy Lake, Pine County, in the afternoon av the sixth av July, in this year eighteen-hundred-and-eighty-wan, and may God have mercy on his soul. Case dismissed."

Whatever folk thought of the Squire's court, the district was well rid of a scamp, it was agreed. A few grumbled, and thereafter pointed out Joe Tom as a murderer unchanged; but these were submerged for the time being, by the gold rush.

It began at New Kerry, where Joe Leahy found a nugget in a post-hole and uncovered what came to be known as the Leahy Vein. It was uncanny the way the news flew in those days before rural telephones, in those days when railroads were still a-building, and you travelled by coasting schooner and then inland by coach over the rugged country roads.

Men and boys deserted the farms, leaving crops to the women, or to rot in the ground; and it was no time before promoters were on the spot, and syndicates formed, and shares sold near and far, and machinery and experienced hard-rock miners coming in from the States, and amateurs from all over the Maritimes and Newfoundland. Duncan's was the centre of attraction, for the Leahy Vein lay to the south-west of it, and Shea's Prospect Vein to the north, and south-east along the post road three mines worked the Bear Hole Lode. Soon that quiet village of Scots farmers had a population of strangers in knee-boots and red shirts, with three hotels, a miners' hall, a big livery stable, seven bars and a brothel. The quiet dark-eyed Syrians came, and Hebrews, and started shops where you could buy anything from a revolver to a beaver hat, and the manager of the Leahy Mine built himself out of company funds a mansion that cost fifteen thousand dollars, a prodigious sum.

I could tell you tales that would sound like Bret Harte, and you would smile. But they're true. It happened. A breath of Poker Flat in the Nova Scotia woods.

IT lived ten years from first to last, but the boom was over in five. The old mining story—more money put into the ground than ever came out of it. The cost of mining those erratic and slender veins was terrific. They burnt a fortune in firewood alone, heating the boilers that ran the mine machinery, with an army of wood-cutters, Newfoundlanders, stripping the ridges for miles. Sometimes they struck another pocket like the one Leahy found, and hope flared up for a time. Then the cold truth sank in once more. And the deeper and colder the truth, the more men talked of

Joe Tom and his mine. They believed he knew the mother lode, that Joe Tom's people had known it for centuries, and invented tales of a haunted lake to bar the road to it. The shores of Fairy Lake were scoured, and the old Indian graves desecrated, and you can still find, bush-choked, the pits and trenches they dug all over the wilderness.

The more unscrupulous began to pester Joe Tom, threatening "justice" for his "crime," and wheedling him with offers of partnership and protection. For a long time he had been watched whenever he stepped into the bush, and the Maltee boys, for their own ends, were among the spies. He dared not go near his "mine," wherever it was; but his grim Micmac humor led them many a merry dance in the wild country south and west of Fairy Lake. Eventually Molly grew tired of Joe Tom's poverty and ran off with a young Indian from Beaver River, who had come to work in the mines. No one in the lake country ever saw her or Jim Ingleson's child again. Old Joe Tom sat in his shack and brooded, and came now and again to my mother for something to eat; and my father went on with his farming, a sane man in Bedlam.

While this was going on I finished my studies and got a church in Cape Breton, and married, and I didn't see Joe Tom again till the summer of '87. There was a guest at my father's; Donohue, the mining expert, brought in to write a post-mortem for the shareholders of the Leahy, and he went with me to Joe Tom's for the sake of the walk. Joe Tom had gone grey and shrivelled, as the Micmac men do when age strikes them at last, and walked with such a stoop that his big knotty hands hung to his knees. We talked for a bit. I didn't mention Molly, nor did he. He talked very little of anything; his English, always halting, seemed to have gone from him in his extreme age.

Just as we turned to go, he caught my arm and asked how long I planned to stay, calling me "Demsher" as he had always called my father.

"I leave in the morning," I said. It was pleasant to speak the tongue that was part of my childhood.

"A long time there is a stone in my heart," the old man said, "because of a thing hidden between thee and me. It makes a coldness, and it may be that if I show this thing—which-is-hidden my heart will be warm again. For I have done evil, and have an evil reward in all things, and am for a long time the prey of evil men."

I THOUGHT he intended some revelation about the Ingleson affair, and tried to change the subject quickly, but he demanded, "Come! We go!"

Joe Tom led the way across his pitiful fields—all choked with sorrel and quitch-grass, and the fences down—and into the woods. We travelled a long time, much of it through black-spruce swamps, partly dried in the summer heat and buzzing with mosquitoes under the melancholy mop-headed trees. I lost all sense of direction, but I knew

we must be moving in some round-about fashion, for it was impossible to go so far in a straight line without striking one of the rounded glacial drifts where the farms were.

We emerged into the sunlight, and looked across a strip of wild meadow and a small sluggish brook to a slope studded with old stumps. It was faintly familiar, and suddenly I knew it for the north pasture of our own farm. I had seen this brook and scrap of wild meadow in the hollow as a boy, but from the other side



Thanks for the memory

A character with his arm in a sling was explaining to a friend what had happened. "My trouble dates back to an evening five years ago," he said. "I was staying at the Crillon in Paris, and the chambermaid came into my room with fresh towels. She was a gorgeous thing—blonde curls, blue eyes, shape that reminded me of a chocolate nut bar—you know, all the almonds in the right places. After she gave me the towels, she said softly: 'Is there anything else, sir?'"

"Not a thing," I assured her cheerfully.

"You are absolutely sure there is nothing I can do for you?" she persisted.

"Absolutely," I said. So she left.

"Well, sir, last night I was standing on a ladder hanging a picture, when suddenly I realised what that girl was driving at five years ago. So I fell off the ladder and broke my arm."

of the pasture fence. Why had Joe Tom led me here in this furtive and uncomfortable way?

On the edge of the swamp, where the land began to rise toward the pasture, the ground was a tangle of fallen trees. Some of these wind-falls were very old, the trunks and branches gone to moss-covered dust; others were as new as last September's gales. It was one of those places where trees grow to a good size and then blow down for lack of solid anchorage, and, in falling, turn up a great disc of roots and earth and clutched stones, like a dirty wicker basket-lid on edge, ten, fifteen or even twenty feet high.

After a year or two, ferns sprout over the uprooted mass, and grass and small bushes, and the raw circular wound in the earth is hidden by the overhang of alders, which always seem to spring up about such a place

and, perhaps, for just such a purpose.

Joe Tom plunged into one of these thickets, and we found ourselves in the green gloom of a root cave. Six men could have stood upright in it. A spring seeped out of the foot of the hill and trickled among the exposed stones of the floor, and there was a sort of bowl which once had been full of gravel, for we could see its former contents scattered along the back of the cave among the roots.

"Demsher," Joe Tom said. "This is thine. Gold was here, and I took it. See! It was in the little stones, in the sand."

"What's he say?" Donohue asked with impatience.

I said: "He found gold in this place."

"Umph!" The mining man dropped to hands and knees and went all round like a questing dog. There was a rusty shovel in a corner, and a rustier iron frying-pan, Joe Tom's mining tools, unused for years. Donohue scooped some of the gravel into the pan and shook it industriously. After several pans, and still squatting on the ground, he looked up at me.

"Gold? Yes. He's pretty well cleaned it out, but there was a small pocket of nuggets and dust apparently. It came from that glacial drift where the farm sits, washed out by a stream under the ice-mass, back when the world was young. It means nothing. All these drumlins contain a certain amount of gold, scraped off the outcrop in the ice age. If you dug the whole hill apart you might find another pocket or two; a thousand—maybe five thousand dollars' worth. But it'd cost you ten or twenty thousand before you were through. That's the curse of this whole district. Forget it. Let's get out of here before these confounded mosquitoes eat us alive."

Donohue led the way up to the pasture, but Joe Tom held me back for a moment, and his old eyes were anxious as they sought mine.

"Demsher, what says this man? Truly there is gold, much gold, the whole hill is gold? A little I have taken in my days of evil, but now that I have shown thee thy good fortune surely the evil goes from me?"

"Truly the hill is gold, Joe Tom. Thou hast but scratched it. Whatever thee took, that I give gladly from this my good fortune."

"And they will come now, the mining men?"

I shook my head. "More evil than good is in this gold. Like stinking meat, it is best covered with earth. If I give over my father's land to these manmoles, what then becomes of the crops, and the fruits, and the open door for the hungry? Guard thou thy tongue, as I guard mine. In time to come, when no harm can befall thee or me, or they people or my people, then I shall tell of this gold."

That time has come.

THE END ★ ★

Printed and Published by Associated Newspapers Ltd., at the registered office of the Company, 60-70 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, NSW.

Black-headed Gull

BY LAURENCE MEYNELL

Mr. Dallengrant admired the black-headed gulls which frightened other birds into dropping food, then stole it. Mr. Dallengrant was a clever bird, too—

A well-to-do lady (her name was Mrs. Danvers, but the fact is not of much consequence to this story) was walking at three o'clock one fine October afternoon along the pleasantly-crowded pavement of Oxford Street, London.

Mrs. Danvers was out for an afternoon's shopping, and she had just spent an agreeable twenty minutes looking around what is universally acknowledged to be the best of all book shops and book clubs—Lockwood's.

At Lockwood's you may belong to the best library service in the world (Mrs. Danvers belonged to it) or you may browse around the most complete and satisfying collection of new books of all sorts, sizes, shapes and prices to be found anywhere.

Mrs. Danvers looked such a prosperous, fur-clad, substantial sort of figure that you would have been astonished if you could have seen what happened to her heart when, a hundred yards, maybe, from Lockwood's door somebody touched her lightly on the elbow and a soft, honeyed voice said:—

"Excuse me, Madam."

At those mild words and that almost apologetic touch the heart of the prosperous Mrs. Danvers all but stopped beating. It turned to ice, and cold water ran in her veins for blood. She suddenly felt very sick, indeed.

None of which you would have guessed as she turned to see what was wanted of her and who wanted it.

She saw a middle-aged man, bare-headed, with what looked like some sort of small sales book in his hand. He looked benevolent and distinguished.

"Do you want anything?" she inquired haughtily.

The man with the honeyed voice did want something. He was employed, he explained, in the shop department of Lockwood's; employed, he added casually and almost apologetically, as a detective (poor Mrs. Danvers' heart!); he had reason to think that one of the two books in Mrs. Danvers' arms had not been paid for.

"Not paid for?"

"No, Madam, not paid for. If I may reconstruct your actions for you: You first of all went up to the lib-

rary to change your library book; then you came downstairs to the shop, wandered about from one counter to another picking up and putting down various volumes, and finally, after a quick but, alas, Madam, inadequate look around to see if you were watched, you went through the time-honored ritual of placing your library book for an instant on top of the book you wanted—I think it is the book on cathedrals—and then, lifting both up together, you went quickly outside."

"Well!"

The hatless man shook his head sadly. "No, Madam, not very well."

"Are you accusing me of theft?"

"Of shoplifting."

"I don't know how you dare! Why, my husband is a professional man with a big income."

"Alas, Madam, only too often that is the case."

"I can't believe that you are serious!"

"I may be wrong, Madam. In which case I suggest that you accompany me back to the shop and indicate the assistant who served you. We could then thrash the whole affair out in the manager's office."

BUT the man without the hat was not wrong. He knew that he was not wrong, and he knew that Mrs. Danvers knew it.

They stared at one another for thirty long seconds in silence, and then Mrs. Danvers was beaten. All the bluff and bluster left her suddenly.

"I—I—I'm frightfully sorry," she mumbled. "I don't know what made me do it, really I don't. Must we—I mean isn't there *anything* we could do?"

The man without the hat considered. He knew his own particular business perfectly. The book which had been stolen was worth (if he remembered the price correctly) half a guinea; the woman looked more like a "fool thief" than a "hardened criminal thief."

He stretched out his hand and Mrs. Danvers tremblingly handed over the stolen book.

"It wasn't a very noble action," he said.

Mrs. Danvers shook her head.

"If you had the excuse of poverty or hunger," he went on, "it would be different." But you are well off, and if you were put in the dock on a charge your counsel would plead some expensive complaint like kleptomania for you. You would probably get off with a fine, which wouldn't really be a punishment for

you at all. All things considered, I don't think you have much to be proud of."

"I am bitterly ashamed," Mrs. Danvers said, and at the moment it was true.

Very, very slightly the polite gentleman shrugged his shoulders. He had heard lots of women in similar circumstances claim that they were ashamed.

"May I suggest," his honeyed voice said, "that you think over your conduct and where it might have led you? And in the meantime you will understand, I am sure, that you will not be welcome in Lockwood's any more?"

"Thank you very much," Mrs. Danvers said humbly, and when he had gone she hailed a passing taxi immediately. She felt too sick and weak-legged to walk.

The man without a hat sauntered back along the pavement with the book on cathedrals tucked under one arm. He passed the entrance to Lockwood's, but did not enter; and a moment later he crossed the street and presently boarded a bus.

Twenty minutes later he was letting himself into his Bayswater flat.

Mr. Hamar Dallengrant had two living-rooms in his flat—one a small, square, brown, uninteresting compartment in which he ate; the other a rather fine, long, rectangular room where, with Polydore, his Siamese cat, he spent most of his leisure hours.

This room was lined with well-filled bookshelves, and on these shelves, among other similar books, Mr. Dallengrant now put the book on cathedrals. Accompanied by Polydore, he then walked slowly around his shelves complimenting himself afresh not only on his remarkably fine collection of books but on the ease and artistry with which most of them had been obtained.

Half-way round the room there was a picture of a black-headed gull in action.

Hamar Dallengrant paused to consider this. He knew nothing whatsoever about birds, but when the picture dealer had expatiated on the merits of this picture and had explained its significance he had bought it.

The idea of the big black-capped bird making a feint attack on a common gull and frightening it into disgorging the food-booty it carried in its mouth, which the black-cap then snapped up and swallowed itself, amused Mr. Dallengrant. Foolish, frightened, ordinary gull; clever, daring black-cap!

Mr. Dallengrant resumed the appreciative tour of his shelves. There was much to be pleased about; but there were gaps. One book which he particularly wanted was a big, expensive one—*The Drawings and Notes of Leonardo da Vinci*. Mr. Dallengrant sighed. It pained him that he had not got the da Vinci. But he had not given up hope. Some day, someone might be foolish enough. . . .

It had started innocently enough. One day in Lockwood's he had seen a well-dressed woman glance round quickly, slip a book into her smart little muff and stroll unconcernedly out.

• NOTE.—All characters and incidents in this story are imaginary and if any name used be that of a living person, such use is due to inadvertence and is not intended to refer to such person.

He had been astonished and shocked. And he was so intrigued by the whole thing that he went out after her.

The woman turned and saw him. She recognised him as the man standing opposite her three minutes before in the shop and her nerve failed her. She pulled the book out of her muff, thrust it into his hands, gave a sort of strangled sob of "I didn't mean to," and ran, yes, literally ran, along the crowded pavement.

Mr. Dallengrant had stared after her, astonished. "She must have thought I was a detective," slowly formed in his brain, and with it came the germ of his ingenious and highly profitable scheme.

After that Mr. Dallengrant became a well-known figure at Lockwood's. He was there most days and on every other day he made a purchase. It might be an expensive book (but this was not often), it might be a cheap one; but it was a genuine purchase, for Hamar Dallengrant loved books and spent quite a lot of money on them.

And at least once a week he found an opportunity to play the black-headed gull.

After that first occasion he began to look around and to watch carefully; and he became shocked, nothing less, at the depravity of his fellow humans. The dishonesty of them! The numbers of well-dressed, well-to-do women who were prepared to risk everything for a half-guinea or a guinea volume.

Hamar was distressed about it. He positively enjoyed reading them a salutary little lecture.

In the afternoon of the day following the Mrs. Danvers incident, Hamar Dallengrant was back in Lockwood's shop again. Twice he walked past the da Vinci and studied it. Thirty-five shillings was a lot of money even for a book-lover to pay; and there was always the chance of a gull.

He withdrew into his favorite point of vantage and looked around the shop. He had learnt by now that middle-aged women in fur coats were the most likely bets, and there were several "possibles" to keep an eye on.

But Mr. Dallengrant's eye was distracted, more than a little, by a lovely young woman in a tweed coat and skirt who held a big brown paper parcel in one hand and who was slowly walking past the poetry section. At forty-six, Hamar Dallengrant

took rather more interest than was seemly in beautiful young women and he would have given a great deal for something to happen to give him an excuse for introducing himself to this one.

It did.

That very instant it happened. She passed the poetry section—leaving it reluctantly, it seemed—and approached the art shelves.

Casually, easily, unobtrusively, with the skill and address of a practised performer, the young girl rested her brown paper parcel for less than half a minute on top of the da Vinci so that she might lean forward and examine a book at the back of the shelves.

When she relaxed and moved away not only the brown paper parcel, but the da Vinci beneath it was in her small, beautifully shaped hands. Easily, unhurriedly, but without any undue delay, she made her way out of the shop door and into the concealing crowds of Oxford Street.

A DOZEN different emotions assailed Mr. Dallengrant. Such a complex thing is the human heart that one of them—and by no means the least—was dismay that so lovely a creature could be guilty of such sad immorality. But there were other emotions as well, and they took Mr. Dallengrant out after his prey rather more swiftly than usual.

He came up with her within a hundred yards.

"My dear young lady—"

Hamar was fond of addressing beautiful girls as "my dear young lady," just as he was fond of resting his hand, in a purely platonic way, of course, on their arms or shoulders.

"My dear young lady—"

She whipped around.

"My dear young lady, I have just followed you from the shop."

"Oh!"

"And may I suggest that you have acted very foolishly."

She looked at him silently for a moment, and then said quietly: "I don't know what made me do it."

Hamar sighed. He felt that the intricacies of motive were too deep to go into at the moment. The occasion, it seemed, was ripe for talk of other things.

"I daresay we could find a cafe along here somewhere," he said.

"Shall we go and have a cup of tea and a chat?"

An hour later they emerged from the teashop and parted. The girl was better off by a homily on the sadness of moral laxity and by Hamar's telephone number with an invitation to ring him up and seek his advice if she ever wanted help of any kind. Hamar, on the other hand, was enriched by an inward glow of self-righteousness—and by the da Vinci.

He took it home at once and rearranged a whole shelf to give it an adequate and appropriate setting. He settled down to spend a very pleasant evening turning over the pages of his new treasure and occasionally letting his mind wander to the agreeable problem of Beauty in Moral Distress—and Beauty, moreover, who had his telephone number.

Quite early on in this agreeable evening Hamar was disturbed by his front door bell.

Normally he had very few callers and he went to see who might be there a little wonderingly. Wonder changed to excited pleasure when he opened the door and found the Young Lady of the da Vinci on the doorstep.

But excitement and pleasure were instantly qualified by caution. Clearly it would be dangerous to have her in the fire-warmed, book-lined sitting-room.

"My dear young lady," he murmured. "How delightful to see you again."

"I got your address out of the telephone book."

"We are all vulnerable there."

"And you did say I could come to you if I got into any sort of difficulty, didn't you?"

Hamar opened the door wide. "Come in, please," he said to the girl.

She came in and stood expectantly in his dark little hall.

"Most unfortunately," Hamar explained fluently, "my sitting-room is being redecorated. I know you won't mind, my dear young lady, if I ask you into the dining-room—not, I'm afraid, aesthetically a very successful apartment, but never, believe me, more beautiful than at this moment."

The young lady smiled, a thing

(Continued on Page 39)



"Pick-up" Girl

BY JANE ARMITAGE

Whatever else you said about Casey, you couldn't deny he would always help a lady in distress.

CASEY looked critically along the train as it came in and then smiled as he saw what he was looking for — a very pretty girl sitting alone in a compartment.

With any luck he ought to have an entertaining journey, he told himself as he opened the door and got in.

He had thought she looked all right from the platform and as soon as he was inside the train and could see her properly he knew she was. It didn't always follow, as he knew from experience; a glimpse of a face seen through a carriage window sometimes held out a promise which, seen full face, it did not fulfil.

He was something of an expert in such matters, but this one satisfied even his exacting requirements and he could find no fault in the face which was at present bent over the pages of a book on her knees. They were nice knees, too, he noted. He congratulated himself and began to wonder how soon he could start a conversation.

The whistle blew and the train moved out of the station. He watched the tombstones in the cemetery pass the window, his mind disturbed by no reflections on the mortality of man. He felt, on the contrary, very much alive. From the opposite window the girl was watching the towers of Oxford recede behind the train. He wondered if she were interested in architecture; that might be a good opening gambit. But as he watched her she lit a cigarette and began to read again.

Casey sighed gently and picked up his paper. She seemed impenetrably self-sufficient. She had the book and papers to read; her cigarette-lighter worked perfectly; she dropped nothing on the floor that he could pick up and she seemed oblivious of his presence. Although she was so devastatingly pretty, her chin had an arrogant set and he hesitated to open a conversation without some excuse for fear of receiving a well-deserved snub.

The train went placidly on. The girl continued to read. Casey pretended to do the same, but he took in nothing of what was on the printed page.

"Tickets, please."

The compartment door opened. Casey held out his ticket.

The girl looked up. "I'm afraid I haven't got one," she said. Her voice was as attractive as her face.

The ticket-collector brought a book



of counterfoil tickets out of his pocket.

"And I haven't any money, either," she went on. "So it's not much use making out one of those."

She gave the man a smile as she spoke that turned Casey's heart over, even though it was not directed at him. But she had picked the wrong ticket-collector; this one was no connoisseur of women, and he was obviously going to be unpleasant. Casey took his chance.

"Excuse me," he said, getting up. "Perhaps I can help, if the lady will allow me. May I?" he added, turning to her.

HE had the benefit of that smile full face and his heart turned over again.

"It's awfully sweet of you," she said. "But I don't know why you should be so kind." And she looked as though she really didn't.

"Where did you join the train?" the collector asked, quite unmoved by this dual display of charm and charity.

She told him. He made out the ticket and Casey paid.

"That was very kind of you," she said again when the ticket-collector had gone.

"I'm delighted to be able to help," Casey responded politely.

The ice was now most satisfactorily broken. He gave her a cigarette and they began to talk. She was an amusing companion. Casey had Irish blood in his veins and the blarney on his tongue; it was a very successful conversation. He learned quite a lot about her.

"And what do you do with yourself?" she asked him at length.

"Nothing very much, most of the time," he answered apologetically. "I

just hang around hoping I'll meet people like you."

She liked that. "You're really very nice," she said. "And that makes me feel rather awful."

"Why, what's the matter?" Casey asked in surprise.

"Well, you see, I could perfectly well have afforded to get my own ticket. I said I couldn't because I wanted to see if you would offer to get it for me."

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand," said Casey.

"I'm sure you don't," she answered. "I'm just going to explain. The truth is, I'm in an awful mess, but I didn't realise it until I was on the train. I've been trying to think of a way out of it ever since. Then when you got in I thought you had a nice, kind face, but I couldn't be sure—not just from your face, I mean—so I took this very stupid way of finding out. You see, I thought if you would do a thing like buying a ticket for a complete stranger, you must be a nice person and that perhaps you would help me again. But I ought not to have done it and I really am very sorry."

"Is it money you need?" Casey asked.

"No, no," she said. "I want you to do something for me."

"It doesn't sound very gallant, I'm afraid, but that rather depends what you want me to do."

"Carry my suitcase off the train, through the barrier, and meet me with it in the refreshment-room about ten minutes later."

"Well, you've got it all worked out, at any rate," said Casey admiringly. "May I ask why?"

"There'll be someone there to meet me at the station—just simply to meet me—and I don't want to be seen with a suitcase. That's all. I

● NOTE.—All characters and incidents in this story are imaginary and if any name used be that of a living person, such use is due to coincidence and is not intended to refer to such person.

know it sounds very odd," she went on hurriedly. "But it isn't really. You see, I'm only supposed to be going to London for the day but, in fact, I'm going to stay for the weekend. If I have a suitcase, I shall be asked a lot of questions, and that'll mean endless complications and difficulties. Please, please could you do it? It is just possible that there won't be anybody there."

"Well, I don't know," said Casey doubtfully.

"Oh, please," she said again beseechingly. "It would be the most enormous help to me."

"All right, I will—if you'll have dinner with me tonight."

"Tonight?" she said doubtfully "Oh, dear."

"Look, we're nearly there," said Casey. "Have dinner with me to-night and I'll do it; otherwise, it's off."

She smiled. "You win," she said. "Where?"

"The Berkeley—quarter to eight," he said, getting up and taking the case off the rack.

"I'll be there," she said.

"I wonder if you will," he said. "Anyway, I'll see you in the refreshment-room in about ten minutes." He opened the carriage door. "I think I'd better go first."

HE walked off up the platform without looking back. There was a man standing by the ticket-collector, watching the people as they went through the barrier. He glanced briefly at Casey as he passed, but to his relief did not stop him. The girl was following behind. Casey walked on a little way and then stopped to wait, what happened. As the girl came through the barrier, the man put his hand on her arm and said something to her. With his hand still on her arm, he drew her aside from the stream of passengers and stood talking to her.

Casey could see her expression change; then she shrugged her shoulders and the two of them walked away and out of the station. Casey followed. A police car was drawn up unobtrusively outside. The man and the girl got in. Casey walked up to it and opened the door.

"Look here, there's been some mistake," the girl said as soon as she saw him.

"Good morning, George," said Casey, ignoring her and getting in beside them.

"Well, this is her all right," the other man said. "But where's the stuff?"

"I imagine I've got it in here," said Casey, and as he spoke he flicked open the catches of the case on his knee and began to rummage inside. "The pearls are here, and the necklace," he went on, shutting the case again, "but they'll check it when we get to the station."

He leaned forward and spoke to the driver. "All right, Phillips; back to headquarters." The car moved off.

"You low-down, dirty swine!" said the girl violently. "You're a copper!"

"But with a nice, kind face," said Casey. "Or don't you still think so?"

THE END ★ ★

BLACK-HEADED GULL

(Continued from Page 37)

which she could do very attractively, and sat down.

"And now, my dear, you wanted to ask my help about something?"

"In a way—yes."

"You are in some sort of difficulty, perhaps?"

"I'm puzzled—I want to know something."

"If I can help you——"

"I think you can, Mr. Dallengrant." The girl's voice suddenly lost a lot of the dreamy, tentative indecision which Hamar had been finding rather attractive. "I think you can. I'm curious to know what the da Vinci book looks like in your room and on your shelves. May I see it?"

Hamar was flabbergasted.

"My dear young lady," he gasped, "aren't you making some mistake?"

"No. None at all," that agreeable, but now very business-like voice assured him. "No mistake whatsoever. I've got Mr. Lockwood, senior, waiting in a car outside."

"Mr. Lockwood?"

"Yes. He's interested, you know, in what gets stolen from his shop. Quite a lot does. It used to be just straightforward shoplifting—usually by silly women who ought to know better. But lately a rather ingenious complication has set in. It serves the women right, of course; they remain as foolish as ever. But I think you ought to be rather ashamed, Mr. Dallengrant, of the little lecture on morality which you no doubt read to them all."

Hamar might have blushed at that, except that he was busy turning a delicate pea-green with fear of all the disagreeable things he saw looming up in front of him.

"My dear young lady," was all he could say, in a far from convincing whisper. "It's all so abrupt, so sudden. I don't even know who you are."

The beautiful young girl laughed. "Oh, that's easy," she said. "I'm the detective employed by Lockwood's. The real detective. I've been watching you for some time."

THE END ★ ★

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STORYTELLER

YOU could see the neon sign from well down the street. It stood over an open doorway and added its colored light to the patch of white light that poured out of the doorway. The sign said, in green, *The Chinese Room*, and, strung along the top in red were a series of Chinese characters that could have meant something—or nothing at all.

The street was deserted as the police car slid toward the restaurant. Sweeny cut the motor before the car reached the red-lacquered door and the car dipped its nose sharply, stopped, and settled back on an even keel. They piled out without speaking. Jim Hanlon came first. Hanlon was Detective-Inspector now — six-feet-three of tempered muscle that was still as hard as when Constable Hanlon trod his first beat, even though that was a long time ago. The grey hair on Hanlon's head made some people think he was a back-number. Quite a number of those people later revised their ideas in the institutions to which Hanlon sent them.

Second man out was Tracy. A tough one, Tracy. He didn't like people at all. Tracy had an idea everybody outside the police force—and quite a few in it—were potential criminals, and not to be trusted. Tracy hadn't been with Homicide very long. He rode in on the back of a reputation built up the hard way, starting with an unblemished spell on one of the toughest uniform beats in town, and capping it when he shot it out with three gunmen until both sides ran out of bullets and Tracy waded in and finished the three of them with his bare hands.

The other two men in the car concern us less. The driver was Sweeny, who would still have been slapping his fallen arches on a city beat had not somebody discovered that what he lacked in thinking potential was more than made up by a skill at driving that most taxi-drivers think they have, but often haven't. Next to Sweeny sat Clark. A "background" man, Clark; solid, reliable, intelligent, just lacking that little touch of you-name-it that gets a man ahead.

They all got out and walked across the footpath. Hanlon pushed open the glass door and they entered a lobby that was supposed to put clients in the mood for the restaurant below: A huge Chinese vase stood against one wall; at one side of it hung a

The Crimes in the Chinese Room

By John S. Munro

"All these facts must fit into some kind of pattern," said Hanlon. And the pattern the police wove formed a net which brought some strange people to the surface.

tapestry with dragons and pigtailed Mandarins cavorting all over it; there was a niche in one wall and in this squatted a multi-colored porcelain Buddha.

Concealed lights illuminated the obese figure and a wisp of bluish smoke curled up from a little pyramid of Oriental incense in a brass bowl in front of it. The heavy perfume seemed to clog the air, and a mass of smoke a foot thick clung inertly to the ceiling. A carpet of Oriental design covered the floor from wall to wall, and several thicknesses of felt beneath it gave one an unreal sensation of walking on cushions.

A second door led off the lobby. A policeman in uniform was standing just inside the door on a landing at the head of a short flight of stairs. Beyond the landing was the restaurant. Hanlon spoke to the uniformed man.

"Where is it?"

"Downstairs. I haven't touched a thing. Beresford, off the Market Street beat, is watching the body. There's another man at the back door. We haven't let anybody out, but I've been letting in anybody who wanted to." He was obviously pretty proud of his handling of the case, but it didn't do his ego any good when Hanlon grunted: "That's fine. I suppose there's a thousand people climbing over the body by now."

They went down the stairs and the murmur of talk fell away. The place was well patronised and the crowd was in no doubt about the identity of the newcomers.

The room was long and fairly narrow. A heavy wrought-iron cage with lights in it hung in each corner. The only other lighting was provided by electrically wired Chinese lanterns on every table. Somebody had herded the people back to their own tables after the first excitement, and, although the orchestra had stopped playing, the pianist was vamping softly on a baby grand at the side of the dais.

Beyond the orchestra a small group of people were standing around a table near the centre of the room. In the middle of the group was a policeman. Something bulky lay on the table. Someone had covered it with a white tablecloth. Where the tablecloth ended half-way to the floor the dress and legs of a woman were showing.

When the talking stopped, the silence could have been cut up in solid blocks. A little sea of faces turned towards the table and every eye watched Hanlon.

After what seemed a long time, Hanlon sighed and lifted the cloth. He held it up so it formed a screen against the gaze of most of the room.

Beneath the cloth Hanlon saw the head and shoulders of a woman slumped across the table. She was a blonde. At one stage of her life she had probably been beautiful; now that she was dead, the evidences of age, freed from the will of the woman, were there for anybody to see. She didn't look any prettier than any other dead blonde.

Hanlon looked down at her for a long time—a man looking at a dead woman, and hoping it wasn't going to turn out to be murder, but really not believing it would be anything else.

He dropped the cloth back over the woman's head and looked about him. His eyes dwelt dispassionately on each face in the group around the table. He spoke first to the constable: "Who runs this place?"

"Mr. Young. Uh—Chinese bloke. He's gone trying to keep things in order.

"Go and get him."

The constable moved off and Hanlon addressed the group: "Any of you people know this woman?"

There was a little fellow standing nervously near the table. He had been straightening his tie and fiddling with his expensive suit ever since Hanlon arrived. He stepped forward now and said: "I—she was my companion."

• NOTE.—All characters and incidents in this story are imaginary and if any name used be that of a living person, such use is due to inadvertence and is not intended to refer to such person.



Hanlon looked at him. "You brought her here?"

"That's right. We — we were friends. Great friends. This is a terrible shock."

"Yeah. What was her name?"

"She—uh—Elsa Lambert."

"And who are you?"

The little man was about to answer when there was a stir in the crowd. Hanlon looked up. The police doctor and the ambulance men had arrived. He waited while they threaded their way between the tables. The doctor said: "'Night, Inspector. What've you got for us?"

Hanlon shrugged. "You tell me, Doc. A woman. Cold as a trout. Take a look."

He lifted the cloth and the doctor bent over the woman. He lifted her eyelids, felt her face, pressed a finger against her throat, then bent down and opened his bag. Hanlon turned back to the little man. He said: "You were just going to tell me your name."

The little man tugged at the knot of his tie and a young man on the edge of the group started to edge away. Without looking at him, Hanlon reached out and took his arm. "Don't leave us," he said. "Stay around a bit. It might get interesting." He released the man's arm and said to the little man: "Well, come on. Who are you?"

"If you don't mind, I'd rather not give my name—not in front of all these people."

Hanlon was sympathetic. "These people embarrass you? That's too bad. But this woman is dead and

I'm supposed to find out all about it. Now, if you don't mind, I'd like to have your name."

The little fellow leaned towards him and said in an undertone: "Name's Clarkson." Then, seeing it hadn't registered: "J. C. Clarkson"—on a rising interrogatory note that said quite plainly: "Hell's bells! Don't you know me?"

Hanlon didn't change his expression. He just said: "Department store?"

Clarkson nodded. "You understand? I can't afford to get mixed up in this sort of thing. The publicity—"

"What kind of thing, Mr. Clarkson?"

"Why—why—this—this . . ."

"Let's not jump any hurdles until the barrier goes up. If the doc tells us this woman died of natural causes, the publicity won't amount to more than two inches in tomorrow's papers. If it should turn out that it's not that way, that'll be plenty of time to start figuring the publicity angles."

THE constable was back. With him was a tall, well-built Chinese, dressed smartly in the height of Occidental fashion. His taste was perfect. A thin moustache lay along his upper lip and his black hair glistened in the light. He spoke to Hanlon at once in a soft, well-modulated voice: "My name is Young; I own the Chinese Room. I'll do anything I can to help."

"What do you know about this thing?"

The Oriental creased his smooth brow. "I can't tell much about it; I was giving instructions to the band-leader. I was about to leave him when I heard a woman scream. I looked this way and saw—this."

"Let's have a little more detail. Just what did you see?"

"Well, the woman had fallen across the table. I hurried over to see what had happened, and it seemed obvious that she was dead. I—"

"Just a minute. Who else was at the table?"

Young looked around. "This gentleman." He indicated the young man who had tried to leave. "He reached the girl before I did. He tried to lift her head. It was the — limp way she hung in his hands that made me sure she was dead."

The doctor straightened and Hanlon waited for his words.

"There are indications of poisoning," he said, "but it's puzzling: Some of the symptoms are present and others are not. I'll get it down to the morgue and do a PM. Are you finished with it?"

"Not yet. Photographers aren't here yet."

"Well, I can't tell you anything accurate until I've done an autopsy."

"Could it have been natural causes?"

"Most unlikely. My money's on a highly lethal poison. But just what poison or how it was administered will have to wait." He snapped his bag shut and prepared to go. Then he said: "I never heard of a woman poisoning herself under circumstances like these. Why don't you call it

homicide and work on from there?" He walked away.

Hanlon took off his overcoat and threw it over a chair. As the doctor went up the stairs the photographers came down. They pulled the cloth away from the body and began setting up their cameras. Hanlon said heavily: "Shoot it from every side, then get a shot from each side of the room, one from the bandstand and one from the top of the stairs. And hurry, I want a PM report as soon as I can get it."

He turned back to Young. "So the woman screamed before she fell on the table?"

"Oh no. It wasn't the dead woman that screamed."

"Who, then?"

He waved a hand at an adjoining table. "There was a girl here, at this table. It was she who screamed."

Hanlon looked at the table. A young man was sitting there with a worried expression on his face. There was no girl at the table. Hanlon nodded his head at the young man. "You. What about this girl? Where is she?"

"I—uh—I think she's gone."

"Were you at the table when she screamed?"

"Yes."

"What did she do then?"

"I'm afraid I don't know. It was all so confused. I had my back to the other table. The girl with me apparently saw the woman collapse. She screamed and stood up. I turned round and saw what was going on, and I got up and went over to the table."

"Who else came over?"

"The manager was there, and this chap"—indicating the other young man. "Then there seemed to be—well, everybody in the place seemed to crowd around."

"And the girl?"

"I don't remember whether she was there or not. But when the manager sent us all back to our tables she wasn't there any more."

"Who was she?"

"I—uh—well, I guess I don't know. I sort of pirated her."

"Here?"

"Yes. She was alone, and so was I, so—"

Young interposed: "That's true. I saw it." He shrugged his shoulders. "We don't like it, but it goes on all the time. How can we stop it? A girl comes in here on her own—"

HANLON interrupted: "All right, all right; I know the system. Don't tell me about it." He turned to the policeman: "That's one person who did get out, anyway. Turn the place over and make sure she isn't still here."

Tracy got out a black, leather-covered book and began getting a description of the girl from her companion. The photographers finished their work and the ambulance men got the body on to a stretcher, covered it and carted it away. Hanlon turned to Clark. "Pick up everything on the table and take it out to the ambulance. Tell them I want everything analysed." Clark collected the glassware, cutlery and china and went away with it while Hanlon spoke again to the first young man.

"All right, mister. It's your turn. What's your name?"

"Whitman. Clarrie Whitman." It came out readily and Hanlon, looking over the cheap, flashy clothes, decided that this wasn't the first time this guy had given his name to a policeman. He went on: "What was on your mind when you started to leave a while back?"

"Me? I jus' didn't think there was anythin' to stay for. It wasn't no business of mine, so I decided to get out."

"You know the dead woman?"

"Hell, no. I never seen her before."

"Okay. Just relax. I may need you again in a minute." He turned again to Clarkson. "Now, Mr. Clarkson, let's see what you can tell us."

CLARKSON said: "Look, Inspector, if you think I had anything to do with this, you're—well, you're wrong. I thought a great deal of her and I—anyway, I wasn't here when it happened."

"We still don't know if the girl was murdered or if she suicided, Mr. Clarkson. You were with her so maybe you can help to clear it up. By the way, where were you when it happened?"

"I went out to the cloak-room. I was there when the other woman screamed."

"Where is this cloak-room?"

He pointed to the far end of the room. There was a door up there with a lighted glass panel over it showing the silhouette of a man in a lounge chair.

Hanlon nodded. "What did you do when you heard the scream?"

"I—I didn't take much notice of it. I stayed there a minute or two longer then I came back here."

"You came directly back to the table?"

"Yes. There was such a crowd around it I knew there must be something wrong."

"Who was here when you got back?"

"I can't properly remember. I was so shocked."

"Shocked?"

He bristled a bit. "Of course I was shocked. Who wouldn't be shocked to come back and find a friend dead?"

"How did you know she was dead?"

This time he bristled a lot. His voice became slightly shrill: "Don't you try to pin this thing on me! I have friends! I—know the Commissioner. I won't be framed for something I didn't do. You can't—"

"Shut up!" Hanlon's voice crackled and Clarkson subsided. Hanlon raised his voice so they all could hear. He said: "Nobody is trying to pin anything on anybody. The sooner everybody realises that the sooner we'll get through here. Now, let's have your story"—this to the young man who had been with the vanished girl. "Name?"

"Ince, Francis George Ince."

"You still say you didn't know the girl you were with?"

"Of course."

"You'd know her if you saw her again?"

"Oh, yes. Certainly."

"What kind of a girl would you say she was?"

"Not a — not one of those, if that's what you mean. I'd say she was quite a good type. Nice girls do get picked up sometimes, you know." He tried a grin, but it withered quickly.

Hanlon looked around. He picked on Constable Beresford. "Were you the first one notified?"

"Yes, sir. I was on beat in Market Street. I was about half a block away from here when a girl ran up to me. . . ." His voice trailed away as the enormity of his error suddenly came home to him.

Hanlon leaned back against a chair and sighed. Tracy rapped: "It never occurred to you to bring the woman back with you?"

The constable faltered: "No. Hell, I'm sorry. I—uh—I never been mixed up in a murder case before. When she said 'dead woman,' I just couldn't think of anything, but getting here as quick as I could."

Hanlon put in: "I suppose you can give us a description of the woman?"

"Well, it was pretty dark, but I'd say she was in her twenties. Dark hair, and she wore a dark red dress."

Hanlon looked at Ince. "Check?"

Ince nodded. "Could be."

Hanlon said to Beresford: "All right. Here's another job for you. Don't miff this one. Get up on the front door with the other men and take the names and addresses of everyone in the place as they go out."

Tracy said: "You letting them go?"

"Uh-huh. All except this little team. Has Young got an office here?"

Young furnished the reply. He said: "Of course. Up front under the stairs." He led the way and Hanlon motioned for the others to follow. They trooped into the office and Hanlon closed the door. He spoke at once.

"I want every one of you to think back and try to remember any incident—I don't care how small it may appear—that may throw some light on this thing. This much I promise you: Whatever happened out there tonight, I'm going to find out everything there is to know. And I'm not going to like the guy who doesn't tell all he knows now. What about it?"

THERE was silence in the room while Hanlon's eyes went from one man to the other. After a full minute, Hanlon said: "Okay. Let's play it the hard way. You can leave. Give your names to the men on the door. You'll be hearing from me."

He sat down at Young's desk and watched them go. Tracy waited for Hanlon to speak. Sweeny shifted uncomfortably against the wall. Clark sat stolidly in a chair. The door opened and Young came in. He smiled. "Getting anywhere?"

"Maybe. Did you know the Lambert woman?"

"No. I don't think I ever saw her before."

"You know Clarkson?"

"By sight only. He comes here quite often."

"But you never saw him with the Lambert woman?"

He shook his head slowly. "He may have brought her here before,

but I can't remember. So many women come in here." He smiled.

There was a tap at the door. Tracy opened it and admitted a young man in a dinner suit. He was shortish, with jet-black hair and a sallow complexion, good looking in a mulish kind of way, but his lips, thick and sensual, were weak. He leaned against the wall as if he were tired—or scared.

Young looked at him sharply. Before anyone could speak, Young said: "This is Tony Quintana. Tony runs the band here."

Hanlon said: "All right, Tony. Is there something you want to tell us?"

Quintana looked nervously at Young, then back to Hanlon. Hanlon said: "Perhaps you'll leave us alone, Mr. Young."

It was obvious that Young didn't like it. He hesitated a moment, then shrugged his shoulders and went out.

Tracy shut the door, and Hanlon said: "Well, what's on your mind?"

"It's about the murder."

"Who told you it was murder?"

"Are you kiddin'? I know it was murder; I saw it done."

"How do you mean, you saw it done?"

"I saw her put the poison in the food."

"Who?"

"Iris Rutherford."

The telephone rang. Hanlon picked it up, said "Hello," paused and said: "This is Hanlon speaking—yeah—yeah—uh—uh—right. Okay, thanks," and hung up. He went back to Quintana.

"Who is Iris Rutherford?"

"She's the dame that did it. I saw her drop stuff in the dame's food."

"Where is she now?"

"She's the one you're looking for. She got the hell out of it as soon as the dame keeled over."

"Where does she live?"

"Up on Elbert Street. She's got a flat up there. Number six-o-five."

"You know her well?"

"Fairly well. She comes in here a lot."

"Talk to her tonight?"

"No—uh, well, just for a minute or so."

"What did you talk about?"

"Oh, nothin' much."

"You can't recall any of it?"

"Oh, it was just talk—how was she—and she looks nice in her dress an' all that stuff."

"Why do you suppose she wanted to kill Lambert?"

"I dunno. How would I know? Nobody knows what a dame will do."

"You don't like Iris very much, do you?"

"Me? I got nothin' against her. She's jus' a dame."

"Well, why are you trying to frame her for murder?"

He jumped at that. "Frame her? Me? I tell ya I saw her dump this stuff in the dame's food."

"But you didn't do anything about it at the time. What's the matter here? Do people drop things in other people's food so often that nobody takes any notice of it? Where do you live?"

He was sullen now. "The Wardour Hotel."

"Okay. That's all."

He started to speak again, but Hanlon waved him away and he went out.

Hanlon sighed. "What do you suppose is eating that little rat? His story has more holes than Beecham's got pills."

Tracy replied: "Maybe Rutherford fed him a brush-off. Anyway, what if Rutherford did do it?"

"If she did, she got the poison into her some other way. I just had the doc's report and the analyst's findings. The doc says the poison is a new one on him. Some kind of opiate in heavy quantities. It was administered orally. Then the analyst: He says there was no poison in any of the food, or traces of it on any of the dishes."

"Begins to look like suicide."

"On the face of it. But I'm inclined to agree with the doc. When a woman takes poison she locks herself in her bedroom, has a nice old self-pity session and writes dramatic notes. I never heard of one knocking herself off so her head will fall in a plate of chicken and almonds in front of a hundred people."

"So what do we do now?"

Hanlon stood up. "We're gonna be busy. First we see Rutherford, then we may get a little more co-operation from Mr. Clarkson in the privacy of his own home."

* * *

Six-o-five Elbert Street was a block of bachelor flats. Iris Rutherford was listed on the hall directory as the tenant of Flat Seven, on the third floor. She opened the door herself and showed no surprise at seeing the police. They went in and sat down.

Hanlon said: "You know why we're here?"

SHE nodded. "Of course. I suppose I should have stayed at the Chinese Room to talk to you. I would have gone to the police station in the morning, anyway."

"Why did you run away?"

"I—panic, I suppose. I never saw anybody die before."

"The way we have it, you didn't stay long enough to see if she were dead or not."

"I was watching her when it happened." Her voice was solemn and the horror she felt was reflected in her quite lovely face. "She seemed perfectly normal, then suddenly her face was twisted in agony. I couldn't think what could be the matter with her. I never saw such pain on anybody's face. Then every trace of expression left her face and she—she fell on the table."

"And you?"

"I had a mad feeling of fear—a sort of terror I couldn't control. I just ran out of the place. I ran every bit of the way home."

"You didn't stop at all?"

"No—oh, yes. Although I did it without even thinking about it. I didn't even remember until I got home—I stopped a policeman somewhere and told him about it."

"What does Tony Quintana mean to you?"

She looked up in surprise. "Quintana? That horrible little beast! He doesn't mean anything to me."

"You don't like him, then?"

"Like him? He's revolting. He's been trying to make dates with me."

"Have you ever had a date with him?"

"No. I wouldn't soil myself by touching him."

"Yet a man you didn't know picked you up in the Chinese Room to-night."

She looked a little defiant. "Well, what of it? This is 1949. I know how to look after myself."

"Have you told us the truth about Quintana?"

"Everything there is to tell."

"Are you sure he's never been up here?"

"Perfectly sure. I wouldn't dream of bringing him here."

"Then how do you suppose he knows your address?"

Hanlon watched her reaction closely. Her astonishment was obvious.

"My address? But how could he know? That's ridiculous; he doesn't know."

Hanlon stood up. "Miss Rutherford," he said gently, "Tony Quintana gave us your address. He even knew you had a flat here. It looks as if he has checked up on you pretty thoroughly. Also, he doesn't like you. He says you murdered the woman who died in the Chinese Room tonight."

Her eyes stared wildly at him. Disbelief struggled with fear and Hanlon, watching closely, was satisfied. He said: "Keep clear of Quintana. He's no good for you. We'll be going now. I want you to stay in town. We may need you later, so don't go out of town without getting in touch with us. And if you think of anything that may help us, please let us know. Good-night."

The others followed him through the door and they went down to the lift. Tracy pressed the button and said: "What the hell, Jim? There were a dozen questions I wanted to ask that dame."

"Sure. And I could tell you what each one is. I just had an idea it might be a good thing to soft pedal—for the time being, anyway. Maybe you don't feel the way I do about it, but, to my mind, every damned witness we've spoken to until now has been hostile, had something to hide, been evasive. I think this girl told us a straight story, so I plan to ease her along. If she thinks we're on her side we'll get more out of her—if she's got anything to give."

THEY rode down in the lift and climbed back in the car. Hanlon instructed Sweeney: "Let's get over to Clarkson's place before we have to get him out of bed and listen to a speech on citizen's rights."

The Clarkson place had been built so that nobody could pass it without knowing that a wealthy man lived here. It stood well back from the road and was reached by a gravelled drive that gleamed white-ly under the cold winter moon.

Tracy pressed the bell and, after a long time, a woman in a dressing-gown answered. Tracy said: "We'd like to see Mr. Clarkson."

"Mr. Clarkson has gone to bed." This was delivered as a dictum that

left no room for equivocation. So Tracy showed her his badge and said: "Police."

Clarkson joined them in the expansive library a few minutes later. He was wearing a rich, silk dressing-gown over satin pyjamas. Sweeny couldn't get his eyes off the gleaming satin legs.

Clarkson wasn't happy. He fumed: "This is intolerable. I've told you everything I know about this hideous business. There can't be anything else that can't wait until morning."

Hanlon was patient. "You spoke about publicity, Mr. Clarkson. We thought you might prefer to talk to us here rather than in your office."

That slowed him down. He said in a quieter voice: "Very well, what is it you want now?"

"First. How long had you known Elsa Lambert?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"I suggest you let me be the judge of what is relevant and what is not. I'm not asking questions to satisfy my own curiosity."

"I've known her about a month."

"Where did you meet her?"

"Uh—at a party."

HANLON rubbed his chin and sighed. "Look, Mr. Clarkson, what you don't tell us somebody else will. Why don't you come clean about it?"

"All right, damn it! I met her in the lounge of the Westmoreland Hotel."

"You picked her up there; is that what you mean?"

"If you want to put it that way."

"Did you have any mutual acquaintances?"

He shook his head. "No."

"You wouldn't have any idea, then, who might want to kill her?"

"None whatever. She was quiet, pleasant, and very likeable. I can't think why anyone should wish her harm."

"Well, that'll hold us for the time being. Don't leave town, Mr. Clarkson. We may want to talk to you again."

Clarkson showed them to the door and they went out into the night again. In the car Hanlon said: "We'll go back to the station. Clark can check the records to see what we can learn about the people involved, and the rest of us will go up to Lambert's flat."

They dropped Clark at Police Headquarters and ten minutes later they drew up in front of a block of flats that had seen better days.

Hanlon pressed the bell. After a few minutes the door opened half an inch and a woman looked out fearfully. She asked: "What do you want?"

Hanlon said: "We're police. Is there a Miss Lambert staying here?"

"Yes, but she's out. Been out since early evening."

"We'd like to go up to her flat."

The woman opened the door doubtfully. "I don't know that I should," she murmured. The men came in and Tracy closed the door. Hanlon said to the woman: "You manage this place?"

"Yes."

"I think you'd better come up to the flat with us."

They followed the woman to a flat on the first floor. She opened the door for them and they went in. Hanlon looked around. It was a small flat—one room, a small kitchenette and bathroom. Hanlon asked: "Did Miss Lambert have many visitors?"

"No. She's only been here a few weeks and as far as I know there's been only one caller."

"Who was that?"

"I don't know. It was a man. I heard a man's voice in here once or twice, and she went out with a man tonight. I heard them in the passage and I saw their shadows as they passed my door—there's a frosted glass panel in the top of the door, and I saw a man's head go past and I heard Miss Lambert's voice."

"Then you have never really seen this man?"

"No."

"And you wouldn't know if it was the same man each time or not?"

"Well, no; I suppose I wouldn't. I just sort of got the impression it was the same one each time. What has happened?"

"Miss Lambert died tonight. I'm afraid it was murder."

"Murder! Good heavens! That's awful."

"Yes. That's why I'm interested in her visitors."

"You mean — O-h! —" Her horror showed all over her face. "You mean the man who was here tonight might have been the murderer?"

"He could be. We don't know yet."

"If only I had seen him. What a terrible thing."

"What was your impression of Miss Lambert?"

"Well, I did think she was a bit of a mystery. She didn't do any work. Always slept late in the mornings, yet she was home in the evenings, too, quite often. She never spoke to anybody much — people in the house, I mean. So we never learned much about her. But why would anybody want to kill her? Thank heaven it didn't happen here in the house."

Tracy was teetering impatiently on his toes. Hanlon, too, had heard enough.

"Well, that'll do for the present. Now we'd like to make a search of this place and we'll have to ask that nobody be allowed to enter it until our investigations are over."

"Yes, yes. I understand."

THEY went over every inch of the room without finding anything of any significance. In the kitchenette Hanlon found two glasses that had been washed and left upturned on the drainboard. He looked at these closely without touching them. Then he wrapped them very carefully in a handkerchief and handed them to Sweeny. He said to Tracy: "Anything else?"

"Doesn't seem to be."

"All right. Let's go."

Back at the station they went into Hanlon's room. He picked up the phone, said to the operator: "Give me the Files Room," and, when the connection was made: "Is Clark there? Put him on." When Clark came on the line Hanlon asked:

"What have you got? . . . Good. Bring it all over."

He put the phone back on its cradle and said: "Clark's turned up a bit of information. He's bringing it over. Sweeny, take those glasses over to the laboratory. I don't think there're any prints left on them, but check anyway. Then have them hunt for any traces of poison."

SWEENEY nodded and went out. Clark passed him at the door. Hanlon said: "What's the story, Bert?"

"There's not much. Whitman has a small-time record. Petty thieving. No big stuff. We have nothing on Ince at all. Young was in the sights of the Narcotics boys three years ago. It looked as if he was mixed up with opium, but they never pinned anything on him. When they busted the opium ring Young dropped out of the picture. They were pretty sure he was in the racket, but he was too smooth and they couldn't quite get next to him."

"Opium, hey?" Hanlon looked at Tracy. "Remember what the doc said about the poison? An opiate? Could be things are beginning to add up. What else, Bert?"

"Quintana is interesting, too. He's a Brazilian. First came here as a member of the crew of a ship. Five years ago. Deserted his ship and the immigration people picked him up. They deported him to Brazil. He raised all hell about it. Seemed to be dead scared of going back to Brazil, but they sent him, anyway. Nothing more was heard of him for over a year when he suddenly turned up here again. This time he came in legally and was allowed to stay. He was out of sight for six months, then he was mentioned in a criminal assault case. The girl said she was attacked by four men at a party. Quintana was at the party, but the girl couldn't positively identify him. One of the men collected twelve months out of it. The other two were acquitted for lack of evidence."

"Was Quintana charged?"

"No. Just his name was mentioned in the thing."

"Uh-huh. Any more?"

"Yes. A year or so after that a choirmaster dropped in at a hotel for some brandy for his cold. While he was there, Quintana sneaked up to him and tried to sell him some French postcards. The choirmaster went out and got a policeman and Quintana went along for a sixer. Since he came out he's been clean as far as we know."

Hanlon nodded. "Ties up with the Rutherford story. Looks like Quintana's a sex case. Got his eyes on Rutherford and she won't play. That'll be why he gave us that phony accusation."

Hanlon picked up the phone again and said into it: "Get me the laboratory." When they answered, he said: "Got a report on the Lambert PM yet? . . . Uh-huh. Let me have a sample as soon as you can." He dropped the phone and said: "The poison has them tricked. They can't tell what it is."

"That's a help."

"Yeah. If they don't identify it,

I'll take a sample up to the University. Professor Christensen up there might know it." He was interrupted by a knock on the door. Tracy opened it and a man from the charge room came in. "There's a woman on the phone, Inspector. Name of Rutherford. She asked for the man in charge of the Chinese Room killing. Says it's urgent. Will you talk to her?"

"Sure. Put her on."

The man went out and Hanlon put the phone to his ear. After a while, he said: "Inspector Hanlon. Yes, Miss Rutherford. Is that so? Is he still there? Right. Stay put. We'll take care of it."

HE was getting to his feet as he put the phone down. He said: "Developments. Quintana just went up to Rutherford's flat and raised hell. She said he was acting like a madman. We'd better go up there." They piled into the car and shot out of the station yard.

At Elbert Street they scanned the scene closely. It was late and there was nobody in sight. They entered the building and went up in the lift. Everything was quiet and they walked softly to the door of Iris Rutherford's flat. Hanlon knocked and the door opened slightly. The girl looked out, saw who it was and threw it wide. They went in.

"I'm sorry to trouble you," she said, "but I think he must be insane. He knocked on the door and I opened it. He pushed his way in and attacked me. He made the most horrible suggestions to me; pushed me back against the wall; I thought he was going to kill me."

"How did you get 'rid of him?"

"I screamed and he ran out. Then I telephoned you."

"Well, he doesn't seem to be around now. Anyway, I'll leave a man here in case he comes back. You needn't worry any more."

"Thank you so much. I'll feel much easier now."

In the passage, Hanlon said: "Anything about this strike you as significant?"

"About Quintana?" Tracy shook his head.

"Look at it this way. First, we have Young suspected of being involved in the dope game. Then we have Quintana known to have abnormal sexual tendencies. Then we have Quintana working for Young. Under the influence of dope a man's normally repressed tendencies break loose. Maybe, Mr. Young has not finished with the dope business. And that's interesting because Lambert was killed with an opiate poison."

"I see what you mean. It starts to look like a pattern."

"A crazy-quilt pattern. A woman dies of poisoning—*orally administered poison*—and there's *nothing* to show how it got into her system."

"So?"

"So nothing. We've got to find out more about that poison. I'll go back to the station and see if the lab. has learned anything more. You stick around here and see if Quintana turns up again. If he's a hophead, and it looks as if he might be, there's

no telling what he'll do next. Let me know if anything breaks."

Hanlon left Tracy checking every means of entering the building and rode back to headquarters.

Clark was waiting with a laboratory report on the glasses. They were clean. No fingerprints. No trace of what they had contained before they were washed. Hanlon said, "Damn," and sat down.

Clark asked: "Anything else?"

"No. Not right now. I'd like to think about it for a while. Go out and get yourself a cup of coffee and see if you can get one for me. And let me have the stomach specimen as soon as it's ready."

Clark went out and Hanlon put his feet up on the desk and silence rolled into the room like an invisible fog.

Twenty minutes later, Clark brought in a cup of coffee. Hanlon was still sitting at the desk staring at the ceiling. Clark left the coffee on the desk and went out. Twenty minutes after that there was a scuffling noise beyond the door. It opened and Tracy came in, pushing Quintana before him. Tracy closed the door and said: "Yeah, it's him. He came back for another try. We had quite a dust-up."

Hanlon looked at Quintana, who glared back at him sullenly. Hanlon said: "What is it with you, Quintana? Isn't it enough that you're suspected of one murder without going round trying to commit another one?"

"Me?" he yelped. "You suspect me of murder? Why in hell would I want to murder that dame? I tell you I never saw her before."

"All right, all right. Now tell me why you're after Iris Rutherford."

"That's none of your damned business."

"When smart guys like you bust into girls' flats and attack them we make it our business."

Hanlon turned to Tracy. "Lock him up. He may be more reasonable in the morning."

"What's the charge?" Quintana screamed.

Hanlon looked at him disinterestedly. "Assault will do for the present. Maybe in the morning we'll change it to murder."

Tracy led him out.

WHEN the grey light of morning came through the window, Hanlon and Tracy were sitting facing each other across the desk. They had just finished tracing every event of the night, sifting every detail for the elusive clue that was always there, yet was so hard to isolate. Hanlon flung his pencil on the table and sat back in his chair.

"It just hasn't broken yet, Trace. That's all. We've got a lot of obscure facts that will probably fit the picture perfectly when the lid comes off, but right now they're only fouling up our thinking."

"So what do we do now?"

"I want Christensen at the University to have a look at the stomach specimen. If that doesn't give us a lead right away, we'll go home to bed. But if it does give us a start, I want to stay with it while the whole thing is hot. We may clean it up before the trail goes cold on us."

"Sure, Jim. Whatever you say."

Clark came in with a small, sealed bottle. He put it on Hanlon's desk.

"The specimen," he said. "The lab. men are still trying, but they'll be glad to have Christensen's help."

They ate breakfast at a small cafe near the station, then drove up to the University.

Professor Christensen was a recognised authority on drugs. He had helped Hanlon before and he was glad to see him now. Hanlon said: "If it's not too early for you, Professor, I'd be glad if you'd tell us what you can about this." He handed him the bottle.

Christensen looked at it casually. "A specimen from the stomach contents of a corpse; prepared in the efficient manner of the police laboratory," he said, smiling. "I take it you have an unexplained death on your hands, Inspector. And since your laboratory sends me a sample, I gather something unusual is present. Most interesting. If you will wait here I will make an analysis at once."

THEY waited while the professor went off to his laboratory. He was gone nearly an hour. When he returned he went straight to his bookcase. While looking for the volume he wanted, he spoke:

"Even more interesting than I had expected. The poison used is an obscure derivative of opium with slow-acting but highly lethal qualities. Its use is not unknown in some parts of China — but less so in these days than in the past. It seems to have been used there quite extensively several centuries ago. Changing conditions have brought it into disuse and very little information exists regarding it." He found the book he wanted and carried it over to the table. When he found the page he wanted, he went on:

"The distillation process by which it is derived isolates the potent factors present in laudanum and morphine and utterly destroys the taste, color and odor of the original opium. The preparation has no medicinal value — Fletcher experimented with it in the nineteenth century — and so it has been ignored by medical science. I know of no instance of its having been used in this country. It is not a satisfactory poison for normal purposes and it lacks the valuable stimulative properties of other drugs which are otherwise similar in some respects."

He paused, and began reading a passage in the book. Hanlon waited patiently until he finished. The professor closed the book and began talking again: "The process of producing the poison is pathetically simple if you know the method. Using a basis of crude opium, it could be made on a kitchen stove. Six grammes is sufficient to kill, but double, treble, or a hundred times the dose would not kill any more surely, more quickly, or — ah — less unpleasantly."

He tapped the book with a slender finger. "This volume lists only four cases of the poison's effect on the human system. In each case, they occurred in the Orient and our chroniclers were not able to investigate as far as they would have liked."

"They do report, however, that the poison, having been taken orally, lies in the stomach of the victim without apparent change for about an hour. Then a sudden chemical transformation takes place. The toxin appears to multiply itself rapidly, it enters the bloodstream and stops the heart action within five minutes. The victim may feel a slight discomfort while this change is taking place — although this has not been definitely established — then, in the very last instant — when the toxin reaches the heart, in fact—the sudden and violent constriction of the heart muscles produces the most excruciating agony, and the victim dies. In some cases, the victim has been known to utter a single groan or scream. In others, death comes without sufficient warning to permit the emission of a single sound."

Hanlon asked: "You say the poison has no taste or odor?"

"None whatever. It was this property that led Fletcher to try to discover a medicinal use for the drug."

"Is there anything else you can tell me?"

"Nothing — except that there is an almost precise timing of the reaction. Death apparently occurs invariably within fifty-five to sixty-five minutes of consumption."

Hanlon snapped his fingers. "Thank you, sir," he said. "That last sentence alone was worth coming for. You have been most helpful." They stood up, and Christensen took them to the door. "If there is anything else I can do, please call on me. But you haven't told me anything about this affair. Won't you satisfy my curiosity?"

Hanlon grinned at him: "I'd like to, Professor, but I just haven't time. You'll read about it in the morning's papers."

Back in the car, Tracy said: "What luck?"

HANLON replied: "Some. Remember those two glasses in Lambert's flat? I'll bet pounds to peanuts one of them carried the dose. This stuff takes an hour to work. What would be easier? Make a date with the girl; call for her at her flat; take a bottle of whisky with you and the poison. You mix the drinks, slip the girl a poisoned one, wash the glasses thoroughly, and leave. Then take the girl some place where there will be plenty of people. Keep a check on the time and when the hour is almost up—get up and go out to the cloak-room while the girl dies."

Tracy stared at him, "Clarkson, huh?"

"Why not?" Hanlon agreed. "Clarkson's a little guy; violence wouldn't be in his line, and he'd be too wary to hire somebody else to do it."

"What about motive?"

"There's the catch. What about motive? Why would he want to kill her? We don't know much about Lambert, yet." He looked at his watch. "Let's get back to the station before the boys go out. We'll get them all to take a look at the body; that may turn up something."

Sweeny made good time getting back to headquarters. They slid to a stop in the yard and Hanlon went

straight to the line-up room. The morning parade was about over. Hanlon waited until it was finished then asked every detective present to view the body before he went out. Then he led the way to his office.

Tracy spoke up: "If the theory is right, Jim, and in view of what we know now about the poison, we can check up whether Lambert got the dose at her flat or not." He pulled out his notebook. "Witnesses say she keeled over at eight-thirty-five. That woman up at Lambert's place said she heard them go out. If she can remember the time it may prove that she was poisoned there."

"Right. If the woman says they left the house at seven-thirty or a little after, that'll clinch it."

THE door opened and two Vice Squad men came in. One of them said: "What did you say that woman's name was, Jim?"

"Lambert. Elsa Lambert."

"Lambert, huh? Well, for our money she was Ilse Langker. She's been on our books for some time."

"Langker? Got a record?"

"A case history, anyway. No convictions. Ilse had a nice little racket of her own. She'd get her hooks into some gink with a lot of money. Then she'd feed him a sob story; Her old mother was sick and needed money for an operation; her kid brother needed dough to send him to a better school; her husband had walked off and taken all her money; she had some of the corniest lines you ever heard of, but she also had a knack of making the sucker believe it. She'd bleed them for all they were worth—but only one at a time, you understand; she was too smart to risk running two at once. When the guy began to get suspicious, or if the vein began to cut out she'd beat it to another city and start all over. She only needed to work about four suckers a year and she was on Easy Street. We knew about her but she's never tripped up badly enough to pin her down."

"And the suckers never complained, I suppose?"

"Not a chance. It's the old story. Most of them were married men and couldn't afford the scandal."

"You're positive of your identification?"

"Oh, sure. I saw Ilse only last week. It was the first I knew she was back in town. We had her marked for observation although we didn't expect to get anything on her."

"Thanks, Joe. That gives me just what I want."

They went out and Hanlon looked at Tracy. "There's your motive, Trace. She was clipping Clarkson and he took a tumble. Maybe she went too far. Maybe she decided he was really big game and got to blackmailing him and he figured killing her was the best way out."

Tracy nodded slowly. "Yeah. It adds up pretty nicely."

Hanlon stood up. "So I guess we'll go down and talk with Mr. Clarkson again. Maybe this time—"

The door opened again. A sergeant came in. He said: "Inspector, there's

a story just come in from the bush that may interest you."

"Yeah? What's it all about?"

"The station sergeant at Burrowdale reported it in by phone a minute ago. Seems a local man took a short cut over a hill near the town and as he was passing an old shack up there he heard a noise. He looked inside and found a girl tied up in the place. He released her and took her down to the Burrowdale station."

"All right. What's that got to do with me?"

"Well, this girl gave the name of Gloria Prince and said she is a singer at the Chinese Room."

"What?"

"That's what the Burrowdale man says. He'd just finished reading about the Chinese Room murder when the girl came in. He figured headquarters ought to know about it."

"I should hope so. Where's this girl now?"

"She's still at Burrowdale. The sergeant's still on the line. What'll I tell him?"

"Tell him to hold the girl until we send for her. And send a car for her right away. Bring her here and don't let her out of your sight. Come on, Tracy."

They went out to the car. When they reached the street, Tracy said: "How does this one make it look to you?"

"I don't know. I can't figure this at all! It doesn't seem to fit anywhere. It could be just a coincidence, but I'm not strong on coincidences. It must be a part of the pattern, but I can't see where it fits."

"Maybe Clarkson can throw some light on that, too."

The car drew up in front of the Clarkson store. Hanlon and Tracy went in. Clark and Sweeny remained in the car. The offices were on the top floor. They took the lift and Hanlon asked for Clarkson at the inquiry desk.

The girl looked doubtful. "Who shall I say it is?"

"Name is Hanlon. I think he'll see me."

THE girl telephoned the message through and they were ushered into Clarkson's office. They sat down and Clarkson glared at them over his desk. "I will say," he remarked, "that I don't regard this as being very discreet. The staff will gossip for days about the police coming here."

"There's more to be worried about than gossip, Mr. Clarkson." Hanlon lit a cigarette. "Tell me this: Did you meet Miss Lambert by appointment last night?"

"Yes. Of course I did."

"Where?"

"Outside the Chinese Room."

"You're sure about that?"

"Quite sure. I could hardly forget it overnight."

"You wouldn't have called for her at her flat, by any chance?"

"No. I did not."

"Uh — remembering that we can check on it, Mr. Clarkson, have you ever been to her flat?"

"Well—er—yes. Yes, I've been there several times."

"But not last night?"

"No."

"Ever been to China, Mr. Clarkson?"

"What damned drivel is this? What does it matter whether I've been to China or not?"

"Have you?"

"Yes. I toured the Orient three years ago."

"What would you say if I told you I have a witness who saw you coming out of Lambert's flat last night?"

"That you—or your witness—or both—were damned liars."

"I see. We'll leave it at that for the present. But we'll be seeing you again."

Clarkson said no more, and they went out. Hanlon shook his head. "I don't like it, Trace. That little guy is too cocky. I watched him every minute of the time for a sign of nervousness and I never saw it. He's just annoyed with us. I don't think he's frightened."

"We better check again with the landlady at Lambert's place."

"I think so, too."

They drove in silence to the flat building and the manageress admitted them. They sat down in her living-room and Hanlon said: "There are just one or two things we want to ask you: First—let's be completely sure about this—you're positive you never saw any of Miss Lambert's visitors?"

"Yes. Quite sure."

"I suppose she used the telephone occasionally? Did you ever happen to overhear any of her conversations?"

She thought for a minute. "No, not that I can remember. But perhaps my daughter did."

"Could we ask her?"

"Of course. She's here now." She got up and called through a rear door: "Joanie—come in here a minute."

The girl who came in was in her late teens. She looked intelligent and Hanlon addressed her at once: "We're making inquiries about Miss Lambert. What we want to know is, did you ever see any of the men who called on her here, or did you ever hear her talking to anybody on the phone?"

SHE shook her head. "I know sometimes she had a man come to see her, but I never saw him. But I heard her on the phone—let me see—the night before last."

Hanlon edged forward on his chair. "Did you happen to hear anything of what she said?"

"Ye-e-s," slowly. "I think she was talking to a man. Yes, I remember her saying something like 'I want to see you tonight, Gordon,' then she waited as if somebody on the other end of the line was speaking, and then she said 'No, I saw him last night, and I'm seeing him again tomorrow night.'"

"Yes. Is that all?"

"Well, she went on talking, but I went down to the end of the passage and I didn't hear any more."

"What was her attitude? Did her tone of voice convey anything to you?"

"Yes. I remember thinking that

she was angry with whoever it was she was talking to."

"You couldn't judge anything of her opinion of the other man—the one she mentioned?"

"No. I didn't think about it."

"Did you hear any other conversations at any time?"

"No, that was the only time I ever saw her use the phone."

"Thank you. That's very helpful. Now we'll try not to bother you any more."

BACK in the car Tracy said: "You suppose 'Gordon' is Young? That is his name."

Hanlon shrugged. "Who knows? At any rate, Young is the only Gordon in the case as far as we know."

"It looks like a little talk with Young wouldn't do any harm."

"We'll get around to him. But first, I'm worried about this Prince angle. I've got to have an answer to that one; let's go back to the station and wait until they bring her in. She might put her finger on the man we want."

Hanlon fretted for an hour before the car arrived with Gloria Prince. They brought her into his office—a tall, slender girl of about twenty-two who, Tracy thought, must have been quite a dish when she was at her best. Right then she looked a bit the worse for wear.

Hanlon indicated a seat. "Sit down, Miss Prince."

"Thank you."

"As I understand it, you've been kept prisoner in a hut in the bush?"

"Yes. I'd have been there still but for a man who happened to be passing."

"Who took you up there?"

"I don't know. When I left work the other night two men attacked me and threw me into a car. They kept me covered with a rug all the time and I didn't get a chance to see them or even see where I was going."

Hanlon sagged a bit in his chair. He'd been hoping pretty hard to get something tangible from this girl. He went on: "What night was this?"

"The night before last."

"What happened when they got you to this shack?"

"They took me into the place and sat me on the floor. Then they tied me to a post and tied my legs together. Then they nailed the rope to the post. They left my hands free so I could feed myself—the nails were to make sure I couldn't get the ropes loose. Then they put food and water beside me and left me."

"You didn't see their faces while they were doing all this?"

"They didn't use a light. They seemed to know exactly where everything was and what they were to do."

"What about their voices? Would you know them again?"

She shook her head. "Neither of them spoke the whole time, not one word."

"And they haven't been back?"

"No. In the morning, when it was light, I saw a note they'd left near the food. It said they would bring more food tonight."

Hanlon looked up at Tracy and jerked his head. Tracy nodded and

went out to give instructions for a police car to await the arrival of the men at the shack that night.

Hanlon continued: "Now, Miss Prince. Have you any idea who would do this to you?"

"Not the slightest. I haven't any money. I haven't any enemies, either—as far as I know."

"Have you ever heard of Elsa Lambert?"

She looked puzzled. "No."

"Ilse Langker, then?"

"Langker? Oh. Yes. She used to—come to the Chinese Room."

Hanlon thought: Evasion again. Half-answers just the same as always. He said: "Miss Prince, I have to tell you that this thing you're mixed up in may be far more serious than you think. Ilse Langker was murdered last night and I have reason to believe her death was connected with your abduction."

He watched her face, trying to fathom the thoughts racing behind it. Suddenly she bent forward. Her hands went over her face and she began to sob. Hanlon waited. After a minute she lifted her head again and dabbed at her eyes with a handkerchief.

"I—I guess I do know something about this," she said at last.

Hanlon waited, and she began: "When I said I can't think who would do this to me, I really meant it. Up there in that shack I've had a lot of time to wonder who was responsible and the only one I could think of was Gordon Young. But I wouldn't believe it—not until now."

"What makes you change your mind now?"

"This—murder. Ilse Langker used to be Gordon's girl."

HANLON'S eyes narrowed. She went on: "Lately Gordon has been asking me to go out with him. He promised me furs and a car anything I wanted. I didn't take him seriously at first, but when he kept at me I reminded him about Ilse. He said they were finished. I asked Ilse about it, and I was sorry I had, because she didn't know anything about it. She was terribly angry."

"When was this?"

"The night before last. The same night they took me to the shack."

"Uh, huh. Now it looks to you that Gordon Young killed her?"

She had been frightened to put the thought into words. Her eyes stared at him fearfully.

Tracy came in and said: "They'll be there before nightfall."

"Did you leave instructions to keep the Prince story away from the Press?"

Tracy nodded.

"What about Burrowdale?"

"Yeah. I told the sergeant up there to keep shut about it and to get hold of the guy who found the girl and word him up, too. They won't get wind of it."

"Fine. Things are beginning to move, Tracy. Miss Prince tells me that Lambert used to be Young's girl-friend."

Tracy whistled. "So! And he'd never seen her before, hey?"

"Yeah, but more than that: Young was making a play for Miss Prince here. He told her that he and Lambert were finished."

"So maybe Young is our man? Well, he could have the opium, anyway. And he could well know how to make up the poison. But what about Clarkson?"

"Yeah. We can't afford to forget Clarkson. But I've got a clue on that: How tall would you say Clarkson would be?"

Tracy thought a moment. "He's just a little guy. I'd say about five-six at the outside."

"And Young?"

"Young must be six feet if he's an inch. Probably a Honan Chink. What's the point?"

"Just this: You remember the manageress at the Lambert place said she saw the head of a man go past the frosted panel in her door?"

"Yeah." Light was beginning to dawn in Tracy's mind.

"Well, I want to know just how high that panel is. I've got an idea it's high enough to let Clarkson walk past it without being seen. But not Young; she'd see Young's head all right."

"Fair enough. You want it measured?"

"Yeah. Send Clark up there right now. With a little luck we'll crack this thing wide open this morning."

Hanlon stood up. Tracy started to leave the room. Hanlon said: "And Tracy: Get Tony out of the cooler and bring him in here, will you?"

Tracy went out and Hanlon opened another door. "Would you be good enough to wait in here, Miss Prince?"

She went into the other room and Hanlon closed the door. When Tracy came back with Quintana, Hanlon said brusquely: "Sit down."

Quintana was shaking. He flopped into a chair and sat there cringing.

Hanlon leaned over his desk and glared at the little Brazilian. "Doesn't feel so good next morning when the dope's drying out of you, does it? What are you taking, Quintana, cocaine or morphine?"

Quintana said nothing.

HANLON barked: "Come on, damn it! I'm sick of playing the fool with you, Quintana. You may as well know the picnic is over. I'll arrest your boss today on a murder charge and you'll go along with him as an accessory, if you don't talk."

Quintana looked up at him wildly. Hanlon stared back and there was determination in every line of his face. He rapped: "Young supplies you with dope, hey? And that's why you stuck to him, isn't it? Isn't it?"

Quintana nodded miserably. Hanlon said: "You knew that Langker was Young's girl-friend too, didn't you?"

Another dejected nod.

"But you were obeying orders, because if you didn't there'd be no more dope for you. Now: How

much do you know about that woman's death?"

"I don't know nothin'." He yelled the reply but it was a yell of desperation, not of defiance. The spring of Quintana's will had snapped and there was no more dope in him to bring it back.

Hanlon bored in again: "Did you know Young planned to murder her?"

"No! No! As God is my judge, I never knew a thing about it!"

"What part did you play in the kidnapping of Gloria Prince? Answer me!"

"I didn't want anything to do with it. I tol' him it was crazy, but he said we had to do it."

"Were you one of the men who took her to the country?"

"No. All I did was fix it so she was kept back until all the rest of the staff had gone. Then she went out an—an' the others did it."

"Where was Young all this time?"

"He stayed in his office."

"All right, Quintana. You're going back to your cell. You'll be charged with using narcotics and aiding and abetting abduction. And you'll play ball or I'll fit you on the murder charge, too. Now get out."

Tracy beckoned to a policeman in the passage and he took Quintana away. Then he closed the door and sat down. He grinned at Hanlon and Hanlon grinned back. Tracy said: "Well, you put the fear of hell-fire into that one."

"And I'm not through yet. Mr. Young is next on the list. Just let Clark give me the height of that glass panel and we go to work."

Clark arrived ten minutes later. Hanlon said: "Well?"

"Just like you said. Clarkson could have walked past that window a hundred times. His head would be a good inch below the glass. It has to be Young."

Hanlon grinned. "Right! Let's go."

THE car drew up to the Chinese Room and they got out casually. Hanlon led the way into the building. The smell of incense was still there in the lobby. The place was dark without its artificial lights, and quiet as a tomb. They crossed the lobby and went through to the landing. Hanlon paused on the top step and held up his hand. They stopped and listened. Faintly, beneath them, they could hear voices in Young's office. Suddenly the still silence was ripped apart by a scream—the scream of a man in mortal pain and terror.

Hanlon leapt down the rest of the stairs with the others after him. They dived at the closed door of the office and it opened in their faces. Clarkson stood there, staring at them in wild-eyed terror. They pushed him back into the room and closed the door. Young was lying doubled up on the carpet with the wooden handle of a kitchen knife protruding from his chest.

Clark and Sweeny grabbed Clarkson and held him. Tracy dived for

the telephone and ordered an ambulance. Hanlon bent over Young, made sure he was still alive and tried to make him comfortable. He looked at Clarkson and said: "You must be crazy. We'd have done this for you, and legally, too. Why did you do it?"

CLARKSON was panting heavily, his eyes dazed and staring. He said thickly: "The swine was framing me. Did you know that, damn you? He was framing me. He killed Elsa Lambert and he was trying to frame me for it. You think I didn't know what you were driving at when you came to my office with your damned insinuations about where I met her last night, and your talk of my trip to China? You think I didn't know that he planted those ideas in your fool heads?"

"Well, I knew more than any of you. I knew more than he did, too. He didn't know that Elsa came to me and told me that she'd been his toy—that he was throwing her over. Yes, and that he'd threatened to kill her with his damned Chinese poison. We didn't know—either of us—that the poison worked the way it did. Damn him! He'd got the poison into her before he threatened her that he would do it—it was working inside her while she was telling me about his threats." He stopped, panting for breath.

Hanlon said: "If you know all this, why didn't you tell us about it last night?"

Clarkson laughed shrilly. "Tell you! Would you have believed it? I was the man with her. She was dead. Young would deny he even knew her—and that's just what he did do—and none of his damned dope-slaves would give him away. And you'd have rooted out the fact that she'd been blackmailing me and I'd have hanged for what he did."

They were interrupted by the arrival of the ambulance. Tracy put handcuffs on Clarkson, and Clark and Sweeny drove him to the station.

Back in the Chinese Room, Hanlon looked around for the last time.

"Excitable little guy, that Clarkson," he said. "Funny thing: When a man's a two-timer himself he can't help thinking everybody else has the same kind of mind. If Clarkson had tried to be truthful instead of clever, he'd be sitting up there in his plush office, free as a bird; we'd have had Young in a cell instead of a hospital bed, and everyone would be happy."

"That Young, too. Quite a character."

"Yeah. A case of ego over-reaching itself. He thought he'd figured the perfect crime. The only weak spot was Gloria Prince, so he figured to hide her away until the thing had blown over. Maybe he felt sure enough of himself to land her even after that—or maybe he planned a dramatic rescue with himself in the lead."

"Well, it's over now. And you know something? I'm tired."

"Me, too. Let's get some sleep. It's been a busy day."

THE END ★ ★

Once You See Their Faces

BY JOHN LAFFIN

There were no targets in that inevitable retreat. No more, perhaps, than an arm lifted with a grenade at the end of it, ready for throwing.

 * REBELS TAKE TOWN *
 * ROME, Saturday. *
 * GREEK Government Army *
 * leaders believe guerrillas *
 * have captured the town of *
 * Kerpenisi, which they have *
 * been attacking since Thurs- *
 * day. The garrison's radio set *
 * went off the air this morning. *
 * *****

COLONEL SPADURAS merely grunted when a mortar bomb burst a hundred yards down the street from his command post in Kerpenisi. Through the shattered window he saw the smoke and dust rise, to be sucked away by the shrieking wind.

Behind the colonel stood a young, stubble-faced lieutenant, warming himself at the sickly wood fire. His uniform was torn and dirty, and the flap of his revolver holster was open.

"A three-inch mortar," the colonel murmured. "That means they're no more than sixteen hundred yards away. And relief is a hundred miles away."

"We'll fight them off, sir," the young lieutenant said confidently. The colonel swung round in his chair and faced his aide.

He said wearily: "Lieutenant, have you ever seen a guerrilla? In action, I mean? Face to face?"

"Well, no, colonel. I—"

"That's it. How can you fight off what you can't see? If ever you see a guerrilla, lieutenant, you may be sure you will be dead a minute later . . . They fight in the dark and snow . . . they steal up on a section post and kill the men while they sleep. And they never get tired. They can do all the things we can't do, and they have all the arms we haven't. Where do they get those arms, lieutenant? Where do they get them?" He shrugged in exasperation, and hit his fist on the table.

The younger man didn't answer. He shivered as the wind gust sliced into the room through the broken window. A runner lying in a doze on a wooden bench behind the door shivered, too, and huddled his knees for warmth.

FRIDAY night, almost. Thirty-six hours since the attack had begun; thirty-six hours and forty casualties. And now they were surrounded. For a moment the lieutenant wished he were one of the village's civilians trudging through the snow away from the fighting. But perhaps that was worse, to be torn from one's home. At least a soldier didn't expect to have a home.

The field telephone rang. The

young officer jumped to it, listened briefly, said "Right," and put down the receiver. "Captain Dimas, Colonel. He is moving back to the edge of the village before night falls. He is going to take up position in the houses."

"Moving back," the colonel repeated. "Always moving back." He scribbled a message and handed it to the lieutenant. "Bellas, give this to the radio sergeant, wait until he establishes contact, and then follow me. I'm going to Captain Dimas."

THE colonel put on his cap and overcoat and tapped the runner on the shoulder. The soldier got up and followed the colonel out into the deserted street. Lieutenant Bellas waited until the door banged behind them before he opened the other door in the room and went into the radio room.

He read the message. It was simply a formal request for assistance; for at least two tanks or three field guns or a company of motorised infantry. The colonel reported his casualties, the state of his ammunition and the fact that he was surrounded.

Lieutenant Bellas watched while the message was coded, and when the sergeant had contacted base he left the post and went up the street.

It was darkening rapidly, but the sound of rifle and machine-gun fire still cracked through the wind, occasionally broken by the thump of a mortar. The mortar, the lieutenant knew, was merely to harass the garrison; to keep up their nerves and get them jumpy.

He saw nobody. Normally there would have been sentries in the streets, but the colonel needed every man of his two companies forward around the village. Once the guerrillas got into the houses. . . . The regulars were poor street fighters. They had never been taught. But the

guerrillas fought so well and so scientifically they must have had expert instructors. It wasn't hard to guess where the instructors came from.

Lieutenant Bellas' thoughts were bitter as he picked his way across the blown-out wall of a house and stood looking round a corner for a moment before he turned it. The world didn't know and didn't care about this little battle.

Perhaps the big newspapers would have a little paragraph about it. But it wouldn't show the picture; it wouldn't tell the story. And yet this little battle, part of a little war, was the world's war, too.

His soldier's brain took over again; ahead he could see dark figures running back to the edge of houses, covered by the now furious fire of machine-guns. One figure pitched forward and lay crumpled on the snow; another ran back, knelt by the prostrate man for a moment, then picked up the man's rifle and ran on.

BELLAS took all this in before he himself reached the houses at a run. He ran from one to the other until he found the colonel, peering round the side of a window with Captain Dimas.

The short, dark-faced captain tried to grin at Bellas, but his frozen face wouldn't form expressions. At the other window in the room men were mounting a light machine-gun on a table.

The lieutenant said: "Colonel, the radio sergeant is alone at the command post. If he should get a message, if the field telephone—"

"What? Oh, yes, Bellas. Send a corporal and a man back to take messages."

The lieutenant suppressed a frown. "I was about to suggest, sir, an officer." A command post in charge of



a corporal! What was the old idiot thinking of.

The colonel wasn't really old. He was forty-two. But he knew how the battle had to end; how it always ended for garrisons caught like this. Help wouldn't come; it never did.

"You, perhaps?" he said wearily. "Captain Dimas is the only officer of his company alive. And what would you do if Captain Vriding or Lieutenant Gregor should ring and ask for help? What could you do? Send a corporal, Bellas; you'll be needed here."

A MAN near the window screamed and clutched his throat and a chip flew out of the rough-plastered wall behind him.

It was past midnight. Bellas, sitting on the floor with his back against the wall, slept fitfully. He was cold; it was only half an hour since he had come back from a trip to the command post. The thin circle of men about the village was intact. But if there was a break, where would reinforcements come from? There should be an entire company waiting in reserve ready to move anywhere.

Intermittently the guns fired across their front or traversed their arc, hoping to nip any attack before it started. But when you fought guerrillas you never knew when an arm might flash up in the window in front of you and hurl a grenade. An arm only; you never saw a face. Unless . . .

It was past three o'clock. Bellas slept heavily, his head lolling on his chest. Only the two men on guard were awake; the others all slept; the smell of their bodies filling the room. The colonel had fallen asleep on a bed in the house, and Captain Dimas was under the table, snoring gutturally.

There was a shattering explosion, a shout of alarm, and Lieutenant Bellas scrambled up, fighting off his sleep. He bent low, covering his head as

another blast blew the machine gun off the table. He ran for the colonel, bumping into walls in the dark. All was utter confusion. He heard Dimas bellowing and the excited chatter of sub-machine-guns.

"Colonel," he shouted. "Colonel! They're attacking!"

"All right," said the colonel's soft voice in his ear. "Tell Dimas to move to the other side of the street. If we give them this line of houses they might be satisfied, and we will see how things stand in the morning."

When he came back from relaying the colonel's order, the lieutenant found Colonel Spadurus ready himself to make the dash across the street. As they opened the back door they caught the faint sound of fighting from other parts of the circle. The two men's eyes met.

A Verey light splashed red and then a starshell burst. When it had gone out, the colonel said: "Ready?"

Bellas said: "Right!" They sprinted across the snow and the colonel wrenched open a door. From inside someone fired a pistol full in his face. The guerrillas had control of across the street!

Bellas threw himself to one side of the door and fired in. The colonel clutched at his face, fell over and said, "The radio, Bellas; the radio."

GRENAD E flashes lit the street as the lieutenant sprinted towards the command post. And all the time there were shouts and screams and small-arms' fire. Looking back, he could see men dashing about. He couldn't tell who they were.

He almost impaled himself on a bayonet as he ran into the command post. The corporal looked at him, fear in his eyes.

"Anybody ring, corporal?" he said quickly.

"No, sir, nobody rang."

The noises were coming closer.

"Cover the road!" he snapped. The sergeant started up as Bellas entered the radio-room. Bellas snapped again, despite himself his voice edgy with fear: "Take charge of the post, sergeant. I'll take the radio . . . It's all right, I can work it, I was once a signal officer."

As he sat down and put on the ear-phones, he said: "Try to contact the other posts . . . tell them to fall back here." He was about to add: "If they aren't already cut to pieces," but he checked himself.

His fingers moved quickly over the control board; he began to speak into the microphone, concentrating on the job, and yet with his thoughts on himself, the fighting outside, and the colonel back there in the snow. The colonel had known all the time and yet had kept his head.

THE lieutenant tried to think of the future. It had helped before. But now he couldn't think ahead; there was only the present.

He looked down at the sergeant's message pad; it was blank—no reply to the colonel's message for help. He snapped his fingers irritably; he couldn't make contact.

Outside he could hear the sharp staccato bark of a machine-gun; the louder, more definite crack of rifles, and the ear-splitting bang of grenades.

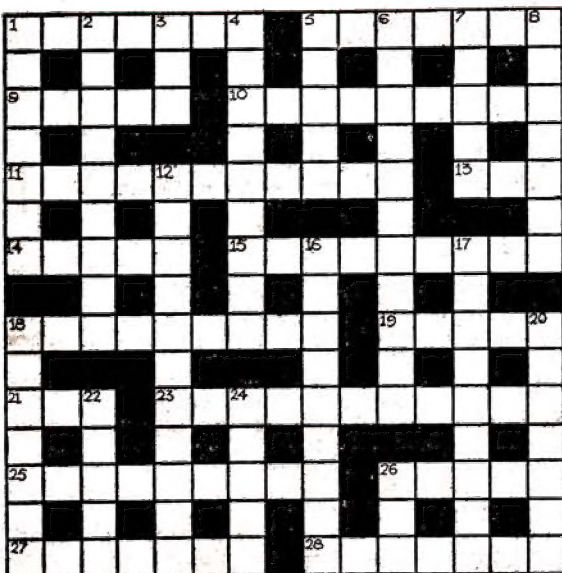
Suddenly he made contact and began to talk, only to be cut off. He was conscious of the silence outside the post now, though faintly he could hear fighting in the distance.

As he again made contact and began to speak, there came the crack of a single shot from the other side of the door.

Lieutenant Bellas' voice broke off as he turned to look in the face of a guerrilla who stood in the doorway, a sub-machine gun under his arm.

THE END ★ ★

POCKET BOOK CROSSWORD, No. 67



ACROSS

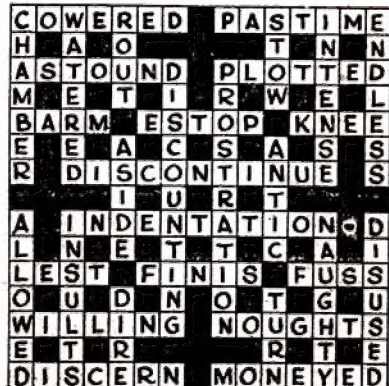
1. Biting.
5. Spiced.
9. Vacant.
10. Recalls.
11. Hint.
13. Seaman.
14. Uncooked herbs.
15. Need.
18. Surrounding pillars.
19. Space filler.
21. Ocean.
23. Valiant.
25. Mix-up.
26. Name.
27. Fulfil.
28. Long steps.

DOWN

1. Ascribes.
2. Disliked.
3. Make effort.
4. Without fail.
5. The Welsh.
6. Reminding.
7. Out of place.
8. Ruin.
12. Diligent.
16. Simple.
17. Restrained.
18. Pies.
20. Heavy naval coats.
22. Scope.
24. Loiter.
26. Peaked hill.

SOLUTION WILL APPEAR
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SOLUTION TO No. 66



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